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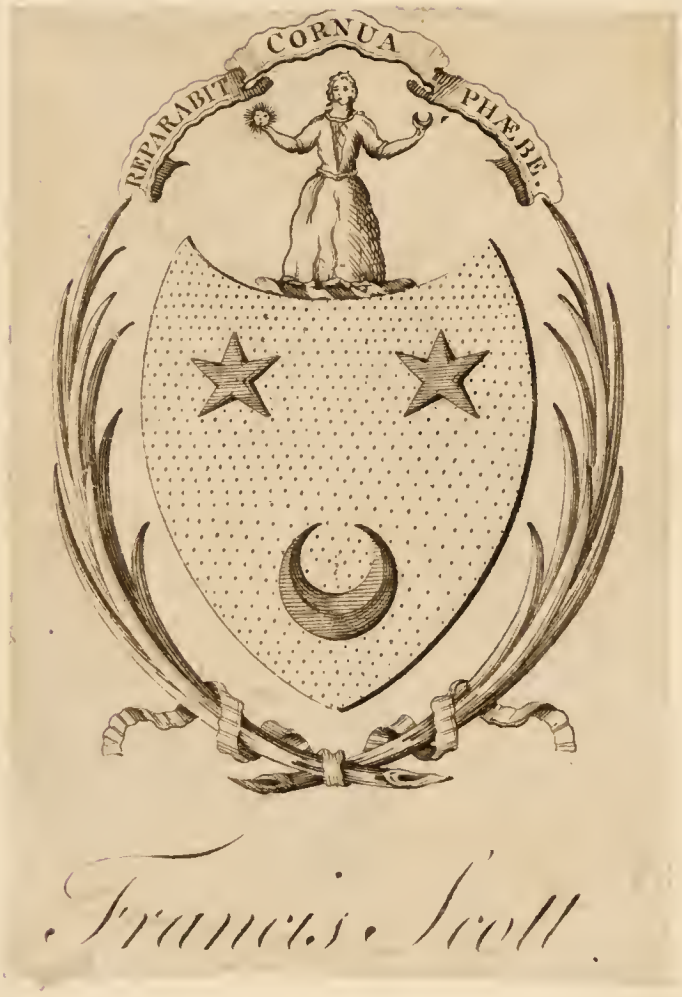

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THE HISTORY OF St. KILDA.

Armin

Bocra

Stakley

St Kilda

Livimish

Hesker

Soa

E

W

S

Well

Landing Place

Livimish

Fort

Well

Christ Church

St Brianans

St Columbus

Plain of Spels

Well of Virtues

The Glen R.

ST KILDA

Stakbirah

Stakdon

Plaste

Soa

Scale of one Mile.

¼ ½ ¾

THE HISTORY OF St. KILDA.

CONTAINING

A Deſcription of this remarkable Iſland;

The Manners and Cuſtoms of the Inhabitants;

The Religious and Pagan Antiquities there found;

With many other curious and intereſting Particulars.

By the Rev. Mr. KENNETH MACAULAY,
Miniſter of *Ardnamurchan*.
Miſſionary to the Iſland, from the Society for Propagating Chriſtian Knowlege.

LONDON:
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THE

INTRODUCTION.

THE iſland of *St. Kilda* may be ranked among the greateſt curioſities of the *Britiſh* Empire. The ſituation of the place, the genius of its inhabitants, their manners and cuſtoms, the conſtitution of their little Commonwealth, that amazing dexterity with which they manage the moſt important branches of their buſineſs, that unexampled courage, with which they encounter dangers inſurmountable to any other race of men, and that perhaps happy ignorance, which renders them abſolute ſtrangers to thoſe extravagant deſires and endleſs purſuits, which keep the great and active world in a conſtant agitation: all

theſe, and ſome other extraordinary circumſtances, taken together at one view, ſeem highly to merit the attention of the Inquiſitive.

It is hardly neceſſary, I preſume, to inform the publick, that the Society for propagating Chriſtian Knowledge, take a peculiar concern in the people of that iſland. —Animated by a primitive zeal, and a diſintereſted benevolence of the moſt exalted kind, they have been for above half a century back continually employing men poſſeſſed of a competent ſhare of knowledge among theſe our domeſtic Indians, with the ſtricteſt orders, enforced by proper encouragements, to inſtruct them carefully in the great truths of our holy religion, and to give the younger ſort ſome tolerable notion of the *Engliſh* tongue.—Sollicitous to know whether the perſons ſo employed have been diligent or uſeful, the Honourable and Reverend Gentlemen, who compoſe that reſpectable body, found it neceſ-

ſary to ſend ſome of the Highland Clergy upon a miſſion to the place; and as I was at that time ſettled in a pariſh, which is the only part of the world that maintains any kind of intercourſe with *St. Kilda*, their commiſſion fell to my ſhare.——To catechize the natives with a conſciencious exactneſs, to preach among them as oft as I could without a manifeſt inconvenience, and to ſee into the ſtate of the charity-ſchool there, were my principal inſtructions: Another was, to collect all the obſervations I could make that might in any degree be thought worthy of being communicated to the Public.

How far I have executed the religious deſign of my commiſſion, has already been communicated to the Society.—Willing to obey their commands to the utmoſt of my ability, I have, from the materials which fell in my way, drawn out what is contained in the following ſheets. The only thing I dare venture to promiſe in their

favour is, that the world may ſecurely depend on the fidelity and exactneſs of the relation, as far as the facts are ſupported by my teſtimony.

CHAP.

CHAP. I.

A Voyage to St. Kilda.——*Occurrences.*

ON the 6th day of *June* 1758, I looſed from *Harris*, a part of that large tract of land now called the *Long-Iſland*, and formerly the *Weſtern Æbuda*. We ſteered our courſe for *Haw-Skeer*, a rock in the ocean, ſo its name ſignifies in the *Gallic* tongue, lying at the diſtance of ſeven leagues from the neareſt promontory of *North-Uiſt*, to which it belongs.—As the day was quite ſultry, and *Haw-Skeer* the only reſting place in our way, and extremely romantic, the crew found it convenient to reſt a little and divert themſelves there.

This rock is half a mile in circumference, acceſſible in a ſingle place only, and though almoſt totally deſtitute of graſs, is of ſome conſequence to the proprietor, being at ſtated periods the conſtant haunt

of a prodigious number of Seals, and theſe perhaps by much the largeſt upon the coaſt of *Scotland*.—The manner in which theſe ſea animals are hunted down in this place, the ſeaſon fit for that profitable diverſion, the ferocity and little ſtratagems of theſe unwieldy creatures when aſſaulted, their love dalliances upon other occaſions, that violent ſpirit of jealouſy with which they are actuated, if provoked by rivals; theſe, and ſome other particulars, are circumſtantially enough related by *Martin* in his deſcription of the Weſtern Iſles.—To his account of the matter I ſhall only add, that the fat of the Seals, is by the people, to whoſe ſhare that perquiſite falls, converted now into oil and ſent to market.—— But in that writer's time, and for ages immemorial before, this, together with the fleſh of theſe animals, was eaten, either freſh or ſalted; and by theſe who were uſed to it, was accounted a pleaſant as well as a very ſalubrious and rich kind of aliment.

On

On the weſt ſide of the rock, are two remarkably large caves, of a conſiderable height: To theſe a vaſt multitude of ſea cormorants retire every evening. Here likewiſe they lay their eggs and foſter their young.——The method practiſed by the iſlanders for catching fowls of this kind, while ſecured within ſuch faſtneſſes, is far from being incurious, though abundantly ſimple; nor is the paſtime at all diſagreeable.——A band of young fellows make a party, and after having provided themſelves with a quantity of ſtraw or heath, creep with great caution to the mouth of the cave which affords the game, armed with poles light enough to be eaſily wielded: This done, they ſet fire to the combuſtible ſtuff, and raiſe an univerſal ſhout; the cormorants, alarmed by the outcry, frightened by a glare ſo ſtrange, and offended by the ſmoak, quit their beds and neſts with the greateſt precipitation, and fly directly towards the light: Here the ſportſmen, if alert enough, will knock

down a conſiderable number of them, and together with the cormorants, whole coveys of pigeons.

At *Haw-Skeer* we found incredible numbers of wild fowl eggs.——After ſome of my people had made a great, though unneceſſary acquiſition of theſe (unneceſſary ſurely to men deſtined for *St. Kilda)* we began to purſue our intended voyage, at ten o'clock at night.——The wind was at firſt extremely favourable, as it blew from the ſouth-eaſt, and was little more than a gentle gale.——It began to freſhen at the end of half an hour, and was gathering new ſtrength every moment: Before we had proceeded above four leagues, the whole face of the ſky was over-caſt with clouds; which, after the ſevereſt threatnings, burſted aſunder and tumbled down upon us in violent torrents of rain, accompanied with flaſhes of lightning and peals of thunder extremely terrible. All this was ſucceeded by a hurricane which would

would have alarmed the moſt inſenſible, and did greatly confound the ſtouteſt ſeaman among us, men who had imagined they had ſeen theſe ſame mighty waters in all their horrors. To me it was matter of aſtoniſhment that a veſſel ſo ſmall and frail, a ſix-oared highland boat, could have ſtruggled for any time againſt ſuch enormous billows, without either being overſet or daſhed to pieces.

The firſt glimpſe of hope my crew had, was from a great flight of ſea-fowls, of the diving kind, which was ſoon ſucceeded by another, and after ſhort intervals by many more, in ſtill greater numbers. They concluded, from this circumſtance, that the hour of their deliverance was at hand; but we found that our hopes were too ſanguine and premature *, for the ſtorm continued to rage for about ſix hours, before we had the

* *Virgil* ranks this circumſtance among inauſpicious prognoſtics, and experience has convinced me, that this obſer-

the almoſt deſpaired of happineſs of ſpying a rock, which lies at the diſtance of a mile from the bay of *St. Kilda*. The current round about this rock is exceedingly impetuous, and ſo its name *Liviniſh* implies, *Lhibh* in the old *Britiſh* language ſignifying a ſtream or torrent.——Whether all the waters we have in *Scotland* under the name of *Leeven*, a name compounded out of *Lhibh*, a current, and *Avon*, a river, run with a violent courſe, I cannot poſitively affirm, but ſtrongly ſuſpect it.

In a little after we had doubled the point of *Liviniſh*, I diſcovered a ſtrangely formed wall of dreary rocks, which face a part of *St. Kilda*. Theſe rocks appearing through the medium of a very thick fog, roſe to our view, to a ſtupendous height, though

obſervation and all the reſt he has made on the ſubject of the weather, are perfectly juſt.

" Jam ſibi tum a curvis male temperat unda carinis
" Cum medio celeres revolant ex æquore mergi."

GEORG. I. v. 360, &c.

quite

quite inconſiderable, we afterwards found, if compared to others on the ſame coaſt.

In a few moments more, we came cloſe to the ordinary landing place, which is nothing elſe than a ſolid rock, ſloping gradually down to the bottom of the ſea, and all over grown with *Lichen Marinus*, or the plant commonly called *Laver* in *England*, and *Slawk* in *Scotland**.

From the great quantity of this plant which grows upon the rock, any one muſt

* The *St. Kildians*, like ſome others of a more elegant taſte, are particularly fond of this ſea-plant. During the incumbency of a former miniſter, one or more of that people, ſcraped away the *Laver* from off the face of the rock with a ſhell. This high crime and miſdemeanor coming to light, the community was greatly alarmed. The chief men of the ſtate met immediately in council, and fearing that this invaluable ſea-weed would be entirely exterminated, unleſs proper precautions ſhould be taken, as the roots of ſome parts of it had in their frighted imaginations been totally deſtroyed by the ſhell, conjured the parſon to excommunicate the guilty; but I did not hear that the Anathema was actually pronounced.

con-

conclude that it cannot miſs to be exceſſive ſlippery. A ſtranger will have ſome difficulty in clambering over it. The natives call it the *Saddle*, and that appellation correſponds in ſome meaſure with its ſhape; but this name muſt have been originally given to it by a foreigner, as the old *St. Kildians* could have had no conception of the thing expreſſed by that word, any more than they have now of the chariots uſed by the ancient inhabitants of *Britain* for war, or thoſe kept by the moderns for pleaſure.

As the wind blew with all its fury into the bay, and as the waves daſhed themſelves with exceſſive violence againſt the rock, juſt now deſcribed, it was impoſſible to attempt a landing.—Reduced to almoſt the laſt extremity we dropped anchor before the *Saddle*, and made a ſhift to ſtand there for five hours more in a moſt diſtreſsful condition, drenched all over, ſhivering with cold, and under the dreadful apprehenſion

henſion of being ſwallowed up every moment.

The machine conſtantly made uſe of inſtead of the anchor, by thoſe who make annual voyages to *St. Kilda*, is a large hamper made of ſtrong wicker and nearly filled up with ſtones.——The foulneſs of the ground is the argument they bring to juſtify a practice ſo uncommon. How far they may be in the right ſea-faring men are beſt able to determine.——One thing I am ſure of, that we made uſe of our anchor without ſuffering the leaſt inconvenience; though the ſurf roſe to ſuch a height that ten fathoms of our cable were alternately buried in the ſea, or perfectly viſible. The truth is, the anceſtors of thoſe men who carry on a ſort of commerce with this iſland, had recourſe to the ſimple expedient of the hamper, before navigation had made any tolerable progreſs in their country, and for that reaſon

reaſon their poſterity ſeem to retain the ſame cuſtom *.

The people of *St. Kilda*, upon the firſt notice they had of our arrival on their coaſt, flew down from the village to our aſſiſtance, men, women and children.—— From their behaviour upon the rock, to which we lay pretty cloſe, it evidently appeared that they have humanity enough to feel deeply for fellow creatures in diſtreſs. —It was impoſſible for us to underſtand the meaning of their cries; only we had

* It is certain that the firſt anchors were made of ſtone, or wood loaded with lead.—We are told by *Diodorus Siculus*, that the *Phænicians* in their firſt voyage into *Spain*, having accumulated more ſilver than their ſhips could carry, took the lead from their anchors and put ſilver in its place.—The inhabitants of *Iceland* uſed a large ſtone with a hole in the middle, with a piece of timber thruſt through it.—In *China*, *Japan*, and *Siam* they have only wooden anchors, to which they tie great ſtones.—The ignorance of the firſt ages, and the obſtinate attachment of men to the cuſtoms of their forefathers, by them held in the greateſt veneration, are undoubtedly the occaſion of ſuch imperfect contrivances.

reaſon

reaſon to believe that they were greatly affected by our danger.—From the repeated ſignals they made, we concluded at laſt, that in their opinion, we might ſafely weigh.—Truſting to their ſuperior ſkill, and our patience being quite exhauſted, we took the hint without loſs of time. But after approaching the *Saddle*, in ſpite of our united efforts, we were ſoon reduced to the diſagreeable neceſſity of ſheering off.

A little to the weſt of this rock, there is a ſandy beach, acceſſible only at low water.——Here is a ſort of landing-place though extremely dangerous, and for that reaſon ſeldom attempted, unleſs the weather be very favourable.—To this beach the people ran in a body, after having directed us to the ſame place.——We obeyed willingly, and they, with an amazing intrepidity flew into the water to meet us; a moſt deſperate adventure, in which any other race of men would hardly think of engaging,

ing, were they to ſee their neareſt relations in the ſame danger. The diſpoſition they made was this: After having divided and formed themſelves into two lines, the two ableſt men among them marched forward into the ſea, each in the front of his own little corps.——Thoſe next in ſtrength and ſtature, ſeized theſe two leaders by the middle, and the reſt, from one end of each row to the other, clung faſt to thoſe immediately before them, wading forward till thoſe who were formoſt in the rank, and after them every one elſe in the order in which he ſtood, got hold of the boat.—— Thoſe who go from year to year to *St. Kilda*, always take the precaution to wrap a ſtrong rope round the ſtern of their boat, and tie another to the prow. As ſoon as the *St. Kildians* have poſted themſelves round it, they immediately hand about the two ropes from one to another, till the women and children who ſtand upon the beach come at it, ſo as to have their ſhare of the work.—This operation which is ſo

very

very neceſſary, being ſoon over, a general ſignal is given, and every individual exerts himſelf with all his ſtrength and ſpirit: The conſequence is, the boat and every thing contained in it, are with ſurpriſing quickneſs and dexterity hauled on beyond the reach of the ſea.

All the ſtrength of this art was with the greateſt alacrity tried upon this occaſion, and with a ſucceſs beyond any thing I could have expected.——Without giving time to any one of us to jump out into the water, the *St. Kildians* hoiſted up, almoſt in a moment our little veſſel, ourſelves, and all the luggage that belonged to us, to a dry part of the ſtrand.

In *St. Kilda*, the miſerable may find relief as well as elſewhere. We were received there by a very hoſpitable race of barbarians (if any one incline to call them ſo) with the heartieſt congratulations, the ſincereſt profeſſions of friendſhip, and the

ſtrongeſt demonſtrations of a profound reſpect.

It is thought perhaps by many, that thoſe who inhabit that diviſion of the *Weſtern Highlands*, are much the rudeſt, the moſt brutal and mercileſs, and in one word, the moſt ſavage-like men within the kingdom of *Great-Britain*. Whether that opinion be ſtrictly juſt or not, is ſubmitted to thoſe, and to thoſe only, who have ſenſe and virtue enough to diveſt themſelves of popular or early prejudices. One thing I may venture to affirm without committing the ſmalleſt treſpaſs againſt truth, that thoſe ſeafaring people, who have the misfortune to be ſhipwrecked about the *Weſtern Iſlands*, or are reduced to extreme diſtreſs there, are treated with much greater humanity and Chriſtian benevolence, than many of their fellow ſufferers, whoſe harder fate drives them to the more barbarous ſhores of ſome other diviſions of *Scotland*, and even of *England*.——

It

It is certain that theſe unhappy perſons would meet with ſtronger marks of true politeneſs, or, what is infinitely more valuable, of real compaſſion and generoſity at *St. Kilda*, than in the more civilized places I now allude to.

If we conſider the ſmall ſpace of time, which intervened between the end and beginning of our diſtreſs, without taking the agonies which affected us ſo ſeverely into the account, the duration of our miſery was far from being very long; but our fears, which ſettled at laſt in a total deſpondency, lengthened out every minute to a degree inconceivable to thoſe who are ſtrangers to perils of this kind. But indeed experience, if examined with care, will convince every man that if the train of ideas which ſucceed one another be greatly accelerated or retarded by any cauſe, external or internal, time though conſtantly running forward, with the ſame equal pace, muſt be proportionably ſhorter

or longer, with regard to the perſon in whoſe mind theſe ideas are formed. It is certain that if one be totally ſwallowed up in a pleaſing contemplation of long continuance, he is ſcarce able to perceive the diſtance that lies, or that ſucceſſion of moments that intervened, between the firſt and the laſt thought, ſenſation, or reflection which paſſed through his mind upon that occaſion.

On the other hand, it is equally certain that the great rapidity of the many different and inconſiſtent ideas which are conceived in the mind, when our bodies are racked with acute pains, or our hearts overwhelmed with any tormenting affection, eſpecially as men have more than an ordinary ſenſibility in ſuch conjunctures, will greatly increaſe or prolong every moment of our time, beyond its natural length. Natural, according to our ordinary way of meaſuring that part of our duration.

CHAP. II.

A deſcription of St. Kilda.

ALL the territories belonging to the Common-wealth of *St. Kilda*, are no more than three ſmall iſlands and five naked rocks.—The principal iſland, together with the reſt, lies in the ocean, of old called the *Deucaledonian*: Its latitude I take to be about 58 degrees and 30 minutes. If the ordinary computation be juſt, it is at the diſtance of eighteen leagues from *North-Uiſt*, to which it once belonged, and at that of twenty from *Harris*, of which it is now in ſome manner a pendicle.—The length of the whole iſland is at leaſt three *Engliſh* miles, from eaſt to weſt; and its breadth from ſouth to north, not leſs than two.——Its whole circumference is faced with an inacceſſible barrier of rocks, two places only excepted; one to

the north-weſt, of which afterwards, and the other to the ſouth-eaſt.

Here is a large bay formed by two promontories, the firſt running out to the north-eaſt ſide of the iſland, and the other to the ſouth end: The former extends no great way, but the latter occupies a conſiderable tract of ground; and from its ſouthern extremity deſcribing a ſort of curve, inſinuates itſelf gradually into the land, till it comes to the north, where the bay terminates.

This bay is ſo open on the one ſide, and on the other ſo much expoſed to ſqually gales of wind, which from the tops of hills and rocks, immenſely high, ruſh down through a deep and hollow vale, with vaſt impetuoſity, that it muſt be, in my opinion, an unſafe road for veſſels of any burden, before the latter end of *April*, and after the middle of *Auguſt*.——I am aſſured the ground affords very good anchorage:

chorage: The experiment has been lately made and repeated with all the ſucceſs that could be deſired.

The hand of Nature has divided *St. Kilda* in four diſtinct parts. Theſe are ſeparated from one another by five hills, which are to the ſea-ſide faced with frightful precipices; the ſmalleſt of which would deeply engage the attention of a ſpectator any where elſe.—The three that lye towards the ſouth and weſt carry names, which, like thoſe of almoſt every place in the Highlands, very juſtly expreſs their ſituation, or the appearance they make to the eye.—That at the greateſt diſtance from theſe is called *Oſtrivaill*, a compound word, partly *Gothic* and partly *Gallic*; which ſignifies the Eaſtern mount. But the fifth, which riſes gradually from the head of the bay, is without the ſmalleſt exaggeration, a real prodigy in its kind, and may perhaps not unjuſtly be ſtiled the Teneriffe of *Britain*: The name of it is *Conagra*.

The top of this enormous maſs of matter commands a very extenſive proſpect. In a clear day, if the weather be ſettled, all the *Long Iſland*, that is to ſay, a tract of land and ſea, more than a hundred and forty miles in length, may be ſeen from it. —But the moſt ſtriking circumſtance about this great and wonderful object, is the figure it makes on the north-ſide: there it hangs over the deep in a moſt frightful manner. A view of it from the ſea fills a man with aſtoniſhment, and a look over it from above ſtrikes him with horror.—Moſt of the crew were ſo terrified that they would not venture to gratify their curioſity in this reſpect, till the natives took hold of their heels as they lay flat to look over it; yet a *St. Kildian* will ſtand or ſit on the very brink of this ſtupenduous precipice, with the moſt careleſs indifference.—I made a ſhift to take its height with ſome degree of exactneſs, and found it no leſs than nine hundred fathoms.—Had I never ſeen this

immenſe

immenſe maſs, I ſhould very probably diſpute the credibility of the account now given, juſt as much as any one elſe may do, after peruſing this account.

The hills of *St. Kilda* are, near their tops, moſtly naked, being either covered with looſe mouldering ſtones, or poorly clad with ſome ſmall ſcattered tufts of a ſhort kind of heath.—From the appearance they now make or formerly made, one of them is called *Ruai-mhail*, or the Red-hill, and the other *Mulach-geall*, or the White-ſummit.

It is far from being matter of wonder, that the tops of high mountains, and more eſpecially in the Highlands of *Scotland*, ſhould be deſtitute of graſs. Great tempeſts of wind and rain, to ſay nothing of thunder and earthquakes, muſt very naturally in a courſe of ages, carry away immenſe quantities of earth from them, and the acceſſion of new matter which they re-

ceive

ceive cannot be very conſiderable.—The lower grounds, at the foot of the mountains, will be riſing up from year to year, and in fact we ſee that theſe too undergo very remarkable changes.

In the turf-pits dug there, a prodigious number of trees, almoſt entire, are frequently found, which muſt have been buried in theſe places, after having been killed or plucked away from their roots, by the vaſt quantities of earth which had been waſhed away from off the faces of the hills above. This, and other accidental circumſtances, conſidered, it is poſſible enough that many of thoſe mountains in different places, which now make ſo dreary an appearance, may have been once ſome of the moſt beautiful objects in the countries where they ſtand; that is, rich in graſs, and clad with a variety of trees.—Certain it is, that men who have attained to a great age, have in this, and many other countries, ſeen extraordinary changes wrought

wrought on ſome hills, and on the grounds adjoining to them.

The ground of *St. Kilda*, like much the greateſt part of that over all the Highlands, is much better calculated for paſture than tillage—Reſtrained by idleneſs, a fault or vice much more pardonable here than in any other part of *Great-Britain*, or diſcouraged by the form of government under which they live, the people of this iſland ſtudy to rear up ſheep, and to kill wild-fowl, much more than to engage deeply in the more toilſome buſineſs of huſbandry.

Their arable land hardly exceeds eighty acres; though to theſe might be added a great many more, were induſtry to be rewarded, and the ſpirit of it raiſed there.—All the lands already cultivated lye very compactly together within the precincts of the village in which the whole community dwells.

In

In the lower grounds are many excellent plots of graſs, which though generally ſhort, is very cloſe. That in the valley on the north-weſt ſide of the iſland is peculiarly fine. This delightful valley is called, from an Amazon very famous in the traditions of the iſland, and whoſe houſe, or diary of ſtone, is ſtill extant, the *Female Warrior's Glen.* A rivulet runs through the middle of it, and diſcharges itſelf into the ſea, near the ſmall creek they call *Camper*, or the crooked landing place, where the people make a ſhift to put in, if under an unavoidable neceſſity of making ſo deſperate an experiment, or if the ſea be quite ſmooth.—Above this winding ſort of creek, in the delightful valley juſt now mentioned, are ſome choice ſpots of ground, where one may ſee intermixed with the more common kinds of graſs, a great and beautiful variety of the richeſt plants, clover, white and red; daiſies, crowfoot, dandelion, and plantains of every ſort. As ſome things are peculiar

culiar to almoſt every place, as well as clime, it is probable there may be plants in this, every way ſtrange, land, which are not the growth of any other ſoil.

Near the *Camper* is a remarkable beautiful ſpot, covered all over with a moſt exquiſitely fine kind of *Sorrel.* It is by far the moſt delicious I ever taſted; having a moſt agreable ſort of poignancy, tempered with mildneſs enough to correct its acrimony. There is a ſpecies of wild fowl upon the iſland, which are extremely fond of it. (Of theſe we ſhall ſpeak in a more proper place.) I ſuppoſe the excrement of this fowl contributes much to the fertility of this ſpot, and to the ſame cauſe the ſorrel probably owes its ſuperior good quality.

The cattle of *St. Kilda* feed moſt luxurioufly during the ſummer ſeaſon, on the plots of graſs now deſcribed; and here they yield, it may be naturally expected,

more

more than ordinary quantities of milk. I had occaſion to know the quality of it. The cream it gives is ſo luſcious, or rather ſo ſtrong, that ſome of my people ſickned upon drinking it.

It has been obſerved already that all the ground hitherto cultivated in *St. Kilda* lies round the village. The ſoil is thin, full of gravel, and of conſequence very ſharp.—Originally it was covered and lined with a vaſt number of ſtones, which have been all cleared away by the inhabitants in ſome former period. All the arable land is divided out into a great many unequal plots, and every one of theſe is in a manner incloſed and kept invariably within the ſame bounds, by the help of the ſtones juſt now mentioned: Theſe ſerve for boundaries, and are not to be removed or any how violated, any more than thoſe were by the antient *Romans*, which their anceſtors had dedicated to their God, *Terminus*: Hence it is, that a *St. Kildian* will find it impoſ-

 ſible,

ſible, however avaricious or cunning he may be, to hurt his neighbour, by encroachig on his farm in this way: And as the ſeveral plots, though very numerous, have every one of them, the ſmalleſt as well as the largeſt, a diſtinction by which it is diſcriminated from all the reſt; the whole body of the people may in a ſtormy day aſſemble together in one place, and without any difficulty divide all their ground at a fire-ſide, without perambulating or taking a ſurvey of it; and this in fact they frequently do.

The names of the ſeveral diviſions into which the land has been parcelled out, have been tranſmitted from one generation to another. Theſe ſound very ſtrangely, and are not, it is plain, originally *Gallic.* —For this reaſon there is not any one among the *St. Kildians*, who will pretend to explain the meaning of them: But one may eaſily diſcover the traces of an *Engliſh* and *Latin* origin, in many of their vocables,

bles, in ſpite of all the changes they muſt have undergone in a courſe of ages, while paſſing through the mouths of a people totally illiterate, and of very indelicate ears.

I ſhall have occaſion to ſhow in the ſequel of this little hiſtory, that ſeveral Eccleſiaſtics, and ſome Laymen too, from a foreign land, muſt have viſited this iſland in ſome diſtant periods. Theſe men muſt have been undoubtedly accounted able Stateſmen, and profound Scholars, by the poor ignorant people of *St. Kilda*. It is extremely probable that one or more of theſe men may have uſurped a kind of *Tribunitian power*, or may have exerciſed it in a legal way, that is, with the full and unanimous conſent of the community; and we have reaſon to believe, that this *Lay-Tribune* or *Eccleſiaſtical Demagogue* would have framed a body of *Agrarian* laws for the uſe of this little ſtate: and though it is hard to determine, whether theſe Legiſlators were Prieſts or Laics,

Laics, though it is more likely they were of the former order; it is plain they had craft or vanity enough, to give myſteriouſly learned names to every diſtinct portion of the ground, which their ſuperior knowledge, or public character, gave them a right to divide and to diſtinguiſh with what appellations they pleaſed. But a long ſeries of ages, the incorrect ear of an ignorant people, and that vitious manner of pronouncing words, to which the *St. Kildians* are incorrigibly addicted, muſt have adulterated or greatly ſpoiled the original names which were given to moſt, if not all, the arable plots. —Among the beſt of theſe are the diviſions called *Multum agria*, *Multum taurus*, *Multum favere*, or *Multum fodere*, *Queen o Scot*, *Land dotteros*, or the *Doctor's ground*, *Lan-phalin*, or *Paul's diviſion*.——It is evident theſe appellations were invented by men, who knew ſomewhat of the *Latin* and *Engliſh* tongues.

The ſoil around the village though naturally poor, is rendered extremely fertile,

by the ſingular induſtry of very judicious huſbandmen: Theſe prepare and manure every inch of their ground, ſo as to convert it into a kind of garden.—All the inſtruments of agriculture they uſe, or indeed require, according to their ſyſtem, are a ſpade, a mall, and a rake or harrow.—After turning up the ground with the ſpade, they rake or harrow it very carefully, removing every ſmall ſtone, every noxious root or growing weed that falls in their way, and pound down every ſtiff clod into duſt*.——As ſoon as this operation is over, they ſow their little fields, ſtrewing them over with a valuable kind of manure, of which afterwards.—I ſay with this choice ſort of manure, if they intend to raiſe a crop of barley; and

* Virgil gave his approbation of this part of the *St. Kilda* ſyſtem of huſbandry, about eighteen hundred years ago, and plighted his word that it will be always crowned with ſucceſs.

" Multum adeo raſtris glebas qui frangit inerto
" Vimineaſque trahit crates juvat arva, neque illum
" Flava Ceres alta nequicquam aſpectat Olympo.

with

with that of the ordinary kind, if a crop of oats. This done, they harrow them over again, and leave them in the hands of *Providence*, to ſpeak in their own ſtile, with a ſettled perſuaſion that their honeſt induſtry will be amply rewarded, unleſs God ſhall curſe the land for the puniſhment of their ſins.

It is certain that a ſmall number of acres well prepared in *St. Kilda*, in this manner, will yield more profit to the huſbandman, than a much greater number, when roughly handled in a hurry, as is the caſe in the other weſtern iſles*. The people

* The Conſuls and Dictators of *old Rome* had no more than a few acres to their ſhare: But as the land in which they lived was fruitful and judiciouſly divided into little parcels; little, according to our eſtimation of farms, though large enough to ſupport induſtrious families; it maintained, though no more than a ſmall part of *Italy*, a more numerous people than all that country, under its preſent management, is now able to bear. It is impoſſible to account, in a rational way, for thoſe vaſt multitudes which the land of *Canaan*

people of *St. Kilda* ſow and reap very early, I mean, earlier than any of their neighbours on the weſtern coaſt of *Scotland*.—The ſoil, I have already remarked, is naturally ſharp and not ſpungy.——The heat of the ſun, reflected from the hills and rocks into a low valley facing the ſouth-eaſt, muſt in the ſummer time be quite intenſe, and however rainy the climate is, the corn muſt, for theſe reaſons, grow very faſt and ripen early.—I ſaw the barley of this iſland about the beginning of *June*, and obſerved that it was higher in the ſtalk than any I had ever ſeen elſewhere at that ſeaſon.

once ſupported, without the help of commerce, a land rugged enough and of no great extent; unleſs we reſolve the matter into the ſame natural cauſes of ſmall farms and great induſtry.——When a people happen to be addicted to commerce, and are under the neceſſity of maintaining ſtanding armies, it may then be juſtly queſtioned, whether in that ſituation of affairs, the ground fit for tillage ſhould be frittered away into ſuch little diviſions.

The

The harveſt is commonly over in this place before the beginning of *September*; and ſhould it fall out otherwiſe, the whole crop will be almoſt deſtroyed by the equinoctial ſtorms.—All the iſlanders on the weſtern coaſt, have great reaſon to dread the fury of autumnal tempeſts: Theſe, together with the exceſſive quantities of rain they have, generally, throughout ſeven or eight months of the year, are undoubtedly the moſt diſadvantageous and unhappy circumſtances of their lives. The *St. Kildians*, have more than an equal portion of this ſore evil *.

* Any perſon who lives for a courſe of years either in *St. Kilda*, or in the iſland near it, will be ſenſible that there is not any thing poetically hyperbolical, in the deſcription which *Virgil* gives of what he had probably ſeen in the *Highlands of Italy*, near the *Alps* or *Appenine-hills*.

" Sæpe ego, cum flavis meſſorem induceret arvis
" Agricola, et fragili jam ſtringeret hordea culmo,
" Omnia ventorum concurrere proelia vidi:
" Quæ gravidam late ſegetem ab radicibus imis
" Sublime expulſam eruerent: ita turbine nigro
" Ferret hiems culmumque levem ſtipulaſque volantis.

GEORG. I. v. 316.

Barley and oats are the only ſorts of grain known at *St. Kilda*, nor does it ſeem calculated for any other.—Fifty bolls of the former, old Highland meaſure, are every year brought from there to *Harris*, and all the weſtern iſlands hardly produce any thing ſo good of the kind.—Potatoes have been introduced among that people only of late, and hitherto they have raiſed but ſmall quantities of them.

The only appearance of a garden in this whole land, ſo the natives call their principal iſland in their own language, is no more than a very inconſiderable piece of ground, which is incloſed, and planted with ſome cabbages.——It has been obſerved, that garden ſtuffs were in much greater eſteem among the lower ranks of people in the weſtern iſlands ſome years back than they are at preſent, now that potatoes are univerſally cultivated, and with ſuch extraordinary ſucceſs. The reaſon is obvious; and the ſame reaſon will

very probably divert the *St. Kildians*, from attempting any improvement in the gardening way.

The ground on the north-weſt part of the iſland, is incomparably better in ſome parts of it, than that round the village.—The ſteward, or in other words, the perſon to whom the proprietor gives the management of the place, prevailed with ſome of the people, a few years ago, to make an experiment on two or three ſmall ſpots there, by turning and ſowing them; but ſo rank were the blades, and ſo weak the ſtalks, that the whole was laid before the ears were perfectly formed.—From this unſucceſsful experiment they draw an argument irreſiſtibly ſtrong: They would have it thought ſo, againſt all future trials of the ſame kind. But their real and great objection againſt all improvements in this way, is the terrible inconvenience of wanting the fineſt part of their graſs; which they are ſenſible enough would be, in ſome

meaſure loſt to them, were this rich ground once tilled.——It is true, their cattle are much more beneficial to the ſteward than to them; as he has an old preſcription right to all the milk they yield, from the beginning of *May* till after *Michaelmaſs*; but ſtill they are of ſome conſiderable advantage to themſelves; as their wives and daughters are employed (like thoſe who were made hewers of wood and drawers of water, by their maſters in the land of *Canaan*, for a crime of which the *St. Kildians* were never guilty) in milking theſe cattle, in which the owners are moſt intereſted only when leſs uſeful.

Another mighty diſcouragement is, that the ſteward will always have it in his power to monopolize the whole trade of this iſland, if one may ſo ſpeak; or, in other words, to ingroſs every thing it produces, excepting what is neceſſary to keep the people alive; or to render them fit for the labouring, rather for another than for them-

themſelves: Nor is it an eaſy matter to redreſs this grievance. So peculiarly unhappy is the place in its ſituation, that the inhabitants muſt, I am afraid, to the end of time, be wholly at the mercy of ſome one perſon, who may ſwallow all the ſmall commodities this iſland can afford; and rule the whole community with a rod of iron, unleſs reſtrained by honour, conſcience, or an uncommon ſhare of humanity.

This being a true ſtate of their caſe, to raiſe up larger quantities of corn than their land now produces, or what will be neceſſary to ſupport them, would contribute very little to the happineſs of the *St. Kildians.*

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

Of the St. Kilda *Houſes.—Of the* Staller's *Houſe, and a* Druidical *Place of Worſhip in the Iſland of* Boreray.

ON the eaſt-ſide of the iſland, at the diſtance of a quarter of a mile from the bay, lies the village, more than once mentioned already.—Here the whole body of this little people live together, like the inhabitants of a town or city. All their houſes are built in two rows, abundantly regular and facing one another, with a tolerable cauſeway in the middle, which they call the *Street*.

Theſe habitations are made and contrived in a very uncommon manner. Every one of them is flat in the roof, or nearly ſo, much like the houſes of ſome oriental nations.—That from any one of theſe the *St. Kildians* have borrowed their manner of

of building, no man of ſenſe will entertain a ſuſpicion. They have been taught this leſſon by their own reaſon, improved by experience.

The place in which their lot has fallen, is peculiarly ſubject to violent ſqualls and furious hurricanes: Were their houſes raiſed higher than at preſent, they believe the firſt winter ſtorm would bring them down about their ears.—For this reaſon the precaution they take in giving roofs much flatter than ordinary, to them, ſeems to be not altogether unneceſſary.

The walls of theſe habitations are made of a rough gritty kind of ſtones, huddled up together in haſte, without either lime or mortar, from eight to nine foot high.

In the heart of the walls are the beds, which are overlaid with flags, and large enough to contain three perſons. In the ſide of every bed is an opening, by way of door,

door, which is much too narrow and low to anſwer that purpoſe.

All their dwelling houſes are divided into two apartments by partition walls. In the diviſion next the door, which is much the largeſt, they have their cattle ſtalled during the whole winter ſeaſon; the other ſerves for kitchen, hall and bed room.

It will be readily expected that a race of men and women, bred in *St. Kilda*, muſt be a very ſlovenly generation, and every way inelegant.—I confeſs it is impoſſible to defend them from this imputation.—Their method of preparing a ſort of manure, to them indeed of vaſt uſe, proves that they are very indelicate.

After having burnt a conſiderable quantity of dried turf, they ſpread the aſhes with the niceſt care over the floor of that apartment, in which they eat and ſleep. Theſe aſhes ſo exactly laid out, they cover with

a rich friable ſort of earth: Over this bed of earth they ſcatter a proportionable heap of that duſt into which peats are apt to crumble away: This done, they water, tread and beat the whole compoſt into a hard floor, on which they immediately make new fires very large, and never extinguiſhed till they have a ſufficient ſtock of new aſhes on hand. The ſame operations are repeated with a never failing punctuality till they are juſt ready to ſow their barley; by that time the walls of their houſes are ſunk down from eight or nine foot, to about four or five.

To have room enough for accumulating heaps of this compoſt one above another, the ancient *St. Kildians* had ingenuity enough to contrive their beds within the linings of their walls, and it was for the ſame reaſon they took care to raiſe theſe walls to an height far from being common in the other weſtern iſlands.

The

The manure produced in this way muſt undoubtedly be good, though probably rather ſharp than of long duration, as it is ſcattered in ſmall quantities upon the ſurface of the ground; ſo that the fiery and ſaline particles of it muſt ſoon evaporate.—Be that as it will, thoſe who practiſe this art are abundantly laviſh in its praiſes.—They call it a commodity ineſtimably precious; and one may venture to affirm, that a genuine *St. Kildian* would ſcruple to barter it away for all the diamonds in *Braſil* and *Golconda*.

It is certain that cleanlineſs muſt contribute greatly to health, and of courſe longævity; but in ſpite of that inſtance of indelicacy now given, and many more which might have been added, I have not been able to find, that the people of this iſland are more ſhort lived than other men.—Their total want of theſe articles of luxury, which have ſo natural a tendency to deſtroy the conſtitution of the human body,

and

and their moderate exercises; will, together with some other circumstances, keep the the ballance of life equal enough between them and those who are absolute strangers to slovenliness.

Besides the dwelling houses already described, there are a prodigious number of little cells, dispersed over all the island; which consist entirely of stones, without any the smallest help of timber. These cells are from twelve to eighteen feet in length, and a little more than seven in height.—Their breadth at the foundation, is nearly equal to the height.—Every stone hangs above that immediately below, not perpendicularly but inclines foreward, so as to be nearer the opposite side of the Grottoe; and thus by imperceptible degrees till the two highest courses are near enough to be covered by a single flag at the top.—To hinder the rain from falling down between the interstices above; the upper part of

of the building is overlaid with turf, which looks like a fine green ſward, while new.

The inhabitants ſecure their peats, eggs, and wildfowl, within theſe ſmall repoſitories: Every *St. Kildian* has his ſhare of them, in proportion to the extent of land he poſſeſſes, or the rent he pays to the ſteward.—From the conſtruction of theſe cells, and the toil they muſt have coſt before they could have been finiſhed, it ſeems plain that thoſe who put them together, were, if not more ingenious than their neighbours in the adjacent iſlands, at leaſt more induſtrious than their own ſucceſſors.

On the Peninſula, which terminates the larger bay on the ſouth ſide, and which, at high water is ſurrounded by the ſea, and in every reſpect an iſland; is ſituated an old ruinous fort, called by the natives *Dun-Jir-Bholg.*

The ſtones of which this ſtrange fabric was conſtructed, are large, nearly ſquare, and muſt

muſt of conſequence have been wrought out of a quarry; there being none of the ſame colour or ſubſtance to be found in the iſland, above ground.—It is plain that thoſe who laid them together, underſtood the rules of maſonry much better than the *St. Kildians* of this age, and they muſt have been undoubtedly men of greater power.

The antiquaries, with whom *Martin* had occaſion to converſe in ſome of the weſtern iſlands, were fanciful or learnedly ignorant enough to tell him, that this fort was built by the *Volſci*.—Could theſe men have meant the *Volſci* of *Italy*, or the *Volſcæ* of *Gaul?* Had theſe ſame antiquaries aſſured him that *Camilla* at the head of her *Italian Voleſcians* was employed in building this *St. Kildian* edifice, that *Turnus*, whoſe faithful ally this heroine was, in the laſt period of her life, had engaged ſome of his *Rutulians* in the ſame hopeful adventure, and that the *Volſcæ* from near the

Pyrenæan mountains, in conjunction with ſome *Ruſſians* from the banks of the *Wolga*, had lent their kind aſſiſtance; any one of theſe conceits would have been not more ridiculous than the firſt, as the ſimilarity of the name is much the ſame in all theſe inſtances.

Some *Iriſh* hiſtorians, after having obliged the world with a circumſtantial account of two illuſtrious worthies, *Partholanus* and *Nemedius*, both originally from *Scythia* near the *Tanais*, and *Palus Mæotis*, who either planted or conquered *their iſland*, and that very early, go on with a chronological exactneſs hardly to be paralelled, to give us the adventures of *Fir-Bolgs*, a new *Iriſh* colony, extremely ancient, though later than *Partholanus*, *Nemedius* and their ſubjects.—The anceſtors of the *Fir-Bolgs* went, it ſeems, from they know not where to *Greece*, under the auſpicious conduct of *Simon Breac*; and the poſterity of theſe, ſorely oppreſſed in that land, ſeized upon

a

a fleet belonging to their perſecutors, ſailed for *Ireland*, and performed many wonderful feats there.

It cannot be denied that the low-country *Scots*, and ſome of the Highlanders among the reſt, have for many ages back valued themſelves not a little upon their imaginary deſcent from the old *Hibernians*, and we may in my apprehenſion find the true reaſon why *St. Kilda* fort had the honour of being called *Dun-ſir-Bholg*, in that popular, tho' ill grounded conceit.

Another reaſon too has been aſſigned. The people of this iſland have a tradition that one *Macquin*, an *Iriſh* rover, was the firſt perſon who ſettled himſelf and a colony of his countrymen in their land.—Be that how it will, it is matter of ſome wonder, that reaſonable men ſhould have thought of rearing up ſuch an expenſive fabric in a place ſo remote, which nature had made almoſt impregnable in every part

of it; unleſs we ſuppoſe that they were under apprehenſions of being purſued thither and moleſted there.

If I were not afraid of being thought fanciful in my conjectures, I ſhould make no difficulty of ſuſpecting that the antient *Hibernians* derived their name of *Fir-Bholg*, from the *Celtic* words *Fir*, men; and *Bholg*, or *Bulg*, which, according to *Feſtus Pompeius*, ſignified among the *Gauls* a leathern budget, or a bag made of ſkins. The *Iriſh* themſelves, and the *Scots* Highlanders, retain that word in their reſpective languages to this day.—An old *Roman* * ſpeaks of a contemptible gluttonous fellow, who placed all his hopes and felicity in a budget or *Bulg* of that kind; and it may be ſaid, perhaps, without the ſmalleſt deviation from truth; that the *Hibernians* of very remote ages, had among their little utenſils or im-

* Cum bulga cœnat, dormit, lavit; omnis in una Spes hominis bulga.——

LUCIL. Satyra 6.

plements, ſcarce any thing more valuable than bags of much the ſame ſort.—Their furniture while at home muſt have been quite inconſiderable; and when employed in military expeditions it is certain that they and ſome others ſecured and carried their proviſions in ſuch budgets.

It is true enough, the name *Fir-Bholg* is a contumelious one, according to this etymon; but that can never be a ſolid objection againſt the propriety or juſtneſs of it; as long as it muſt be acknowledged, that the appellations *Cymbri*, *Sacæi*, *Allemanni*, *Picti*, *Scotti*, *Brigantes*, *Pæones*, *Cyclopes*, *Bagandæ*, and many more, belonging to whole nations and mighty tribes, were originally opprobrious; tho' in proceſs of time abundantly honourable.

The greateſt artificial curioſity within the territories of that little Commonwealth, is a houſe, built under ground, at *Boreray*, an iſland which ſhall be deſcribed afterwards.

wards.—Of the houſe and another fabric, which, in my apprehenſion, greatly reſembles a Druidical place of worſhip, I ſhall give an account here.

At the diſtance of many ages back (the preciſe time cannot be aſcertained) a bold, public-ſpirited, or ſelf-intereſted perſon, whoſe name was *Staller*, or *the man of the rocks*; headed an inſurrection, or rebelled againſt the governor or ſteward, and at the head of a party engaged in the ſame diſloyal conſpiracy (or rather ſtruggle for liberty) poſſeſſed himſelf of *Soay*, and maintained his poſt there for ſome time.—Here he built a ſtrange kind of habitation for himſelf and his accomplices.——The ſtory is of an antient date, but is, by this extraordinary monument, in ſome degree authenticated.

The houſe is eighteen foot high, and its top lies almoſt level with the earth, by which it is ſurrounded; below it is of a cir-

circular form, and all its parts are contrived ſo, that a ſingle ſtone covers the top.——If this ſtone is removed, the houſe has a very ſufficient vent.——In the middle of the floor is a large hearth. Round the wall is a paved ſeat, on which ſixteen perſons may conveniently ſit. Here are four beds roofed with ſtrong flags or ſtone lintels, every one of which is capable enough to receive four men. To each of theſe beds is a ſeparate entry; the diſtances between theſe different openings, reſembling in ſome degree ſo many pillars.

The rebel (or rather friend of liberty) who made this artificial cove, had undoubtedly ſufficient reaſons good enough to juſtify his taſte of architecture; that he muſt have wanted timber to build in the common way is morally certain; it is equally ſo, that he muſt have been apprehenſive the enemy would invade his little kingdom in the night-time: To this we muſt add that he and his aſſociates were

in danger of periſhing by the winter colds. ——All theſe conſiderations, muſt have induced him to bury himſelf and his companions in a ſecure place under ground, like thoſe old *Germans* of whom *Tacitus* gives the following account. " It is the " cuſtom of theſe men to open up ſubter- " raneous caves, which they cover above " with a great quantity of dung: Their " deſign is to have places of retreat in " winter, and repoſitories for their corn. " Theſe caves ſoften the rigour of the win- " ter colds; and beſides, if an enemy " ſhould at any time make an irruption " into their country, he plunders only the " places open to view, but thoſe which lie " concealed or are dug under ground, are " not diſcovered, or deceive the enemy, " for this very reaſon, that a narrow ſearch " muſt be made for them *.

The

* What prudential conſiderations could have induced the antient *Germans* to load their dens above with great quantities of dung (" Multa inſuper fimo onerant,"

The ſtones of which this ſtrange habitation was made, are exactly like thoſe in *Dun-ſir-Bholg*.——That this fugitive could have procured tools to work theſe out of a quarry; that he and his fellow adventurers, ſixteen perſons only, could have finiſhed this building in a ſeaſon; that they could have ſupported themſelves in this iſland without any tillage for a number of years, or that they could have defeated or reſiſted the ſuperior force of an exaſperated governour for a long time; all this, to me, is hardly credible.

I ſhall here venture to offer a conjecture concerning this houſe and the *Druidical*

onerant," is the author's language) I cannot for my ſhare, comprehend, after hearing the reaſon aſſigned for that cuſtom, I can ſcarce hinder myſelf from ſuſpecting that the text has been corrupted; for ſhould the reading of the text now before us ſtand thus ("Multa inſuper humo") which is no more than a ſlight alteration, the reaſoning would be ſtronger, the words and ideas leſs offenſive, and the practice of the *Germans* more agreeable to that of the *Armenians*, *Sarmatians*, ancient *Scots*, and ſome other nations.

place

place of worſhip mentioned above; which, though not juſtified by the traditions of the iſland, may, for ought I can ſee, be equally probable.

What I call a *Druidical* place of worſhip, is a large circle of huge ſtones fixed perpendicularly in the ground, at equal diſtances from one another, with one more remarkably regular in the center, which is flat in the top, and one would think ſacred in a more eminent degree.

Should one poſitively affirm that *Druidiſm* was eſtabliſhed in this remote and almoſt inacceſſible iſland, he might, I confeſs, with ſome appearance of reaſon, be called a hunter of chimeras, or an advocate for paradoxes.——All the temptation that could have invited prieſts of that inſtitution thither, might have been, it is natural to think, very eaſily enumerated: But arguments drawn from ſecular advantages and inconveniencies, are not always con-

concluſive in matters of this kind.—What muſt we think of the antient *Brachmans*, and *Gymnoſophiſts*, or the modern *Dervices* and *Faquins*.——What could have tempted the men of theſe different profeſſions, to renounce all commerce with the other ſects, to abſtain from wine, and animal food, or to deny themſelves a thouſand innocent gratifications.—And what ſhall we ſay of the *Anchorets* among the primitive Chriſtians.

Ambition, as well as religion, has ſtrange effects on the human mind, and if thoſe principles of action happen to dwell in the ſame breaſt, they muſt operate very ſtrangely.

If ſome Chriſtian Eccleſiaſtics, influenced by ſuperſtition, avarice and enthuſiaſm, or ſome higher principle, have prevailed with themſelves to fix their reſidence in *St. Kilda*, where is the wonder that a *Druidical* Prieſt, actuated by ſome one of theſe motives, might

might have placed himſelf at the head of a little ſpiritual empire there.

It is true there are no oak trees in the modern *Hirta*; but were it certain that no ſuch thing ever exiſted there, and that a *Druid* could not exerciſe his ſacerdotal function without the Miſletoo, the leaves of that ſacred kind of wood (a circumſtance too material to have been forgotten by *Cæſar* in his account of that famous ſect) yet a Prieſt of that denomination, might carry theſe indiſpenſibly neceſſary implements from ſome other place into that iſland.—*Pliny*, or any other author, has not informed us, that the leaves and holy fruit of that tree were inſignificant or profane, unleſs newly plucked, or lopped away from an oak, ſo as to be quite freſh; beſides it is very probable that *St. Kilda* produced ſome wood in the days of Paganiſm.

To me it appears extremely probable, that the circular monument in the *St. Kilda*

or

or *Boreray* muſt have been a Pagan temple or place of worſhip. That it could not have been intended for a ſeat of judicature, for the coronation of a King, for a repoſitory of the dead, or for tranſmitting the memory of a battle to poſterity, ſeems very plain; and it is hardly poſſible to conceive for what other uſe it could have been deſtined, but the ſervice of religion.

The *Staller*'s houſe, which lies at no great diſtance from it, muſt have been the work of time, expence, and tranquillity.—I have a ſtrong ſuſpicion that a *Druid* muſt have been the founder of it too; and that the Prieſts of that order (men fond of retirement) may have dwelt there. I am ſenſible that an objection, rather ſpecious than unanſwerable, may be ſtarted againſt this fancy; but if any perſon ſhall be in the humour of calling it a groundleſs one, he will give me leave to offer another conjecture.

It is certain that ſome Chriſtian Monks have viſited the *Hirta* iſlands, and took up their reſidence there.——It is equally true, that though the generality of that tribe were a lazy uſeleſs race of mortals; not a few of them gave extraordinary proofs of ingenuity and a ſteady perſeverance at very hard labour.—Some men of that caſt and profeſſion have hewn cells for themſelves and ſucceſſors out of the hardeſt marble quarries.—A *St. Kilda* Monk of the ſame active turn having a vaſt number of idle hours to lay out on amuſements, after having gone through the more ſerious affairs of devotion, may have thought of building this romantic houſe: And as he would have found out in a little time, that this work was a relaxation to his mind; and would, if finiſhed, prove a very comfortable dwelling place to himſelf and others; it is poſſible he would have ſpared no expence to make it habitable.—And if he wanted the aſſiſtance of any one fellow

la-

labourer, or more, a brother Hermit, or the obſequious ſlaves of *Hirta*; who doubtleſs thought any ſervice done to ſo holy a perſon, meritorious, would have very chearfully lent their aid.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

Of the Churches, or old religious Buildings, and ſome relicts of Paganiſm *in* St. Kilda.

WE have reaſon to believe that Chriſtianity muſt have made ſome progreſs in our country, before the reign of *Conſtantine* the Great: During the heat of that general perſecution under *Diocletian*, ſome of thoſe who had embraced that religion, dreading the unrelenting cruelty of that blood-thirſty tyrant, muſt have fled from *South-Britain*, a *Roman* province at that time, and taken refuge in the *Caledonian* territories: Our hiſtorians tell us ſo, and nothing can be more probable.

There were ſome of theſe refugees, whom the remarkable auſterity of their lives, an univerſal ſanctity of manners, and the ſpirit of their doctrine, rendered ſo venerable

able that the poor cells in which they dwelt, or lay concealed, were in more ſuperſtitious times eſteemed holy places. Where theſe huts once ſtood churches were built, and it was thought that theſe churches were highly honoured in carrying the names of the cells, together with thoſe of the holy perſons who had for ſome time confined themſelves within theſe humble cottages. This is the origin of the names given now, and for many ages back, to that vaſt number of parochial churches and chapels in *Scotland* and *Ireland*, which have the word *Kil*, in *Galic*, *Cille*, and in the *Latin*, *Cella*, prefixed to them.

Monkery began in the eaſt, and was firmly eſtabliſhed there before it was introduced into the weſtern provinces of the *Roman* Empire. The cruelties exerciſed by Pagan inquiſitors, drove many of the primitive Chriſtians into deſerts, and forced them to practiſe extraordinary ſeverities: This hard courſe of life, though at firſt

voluntary, was ſoon accounted a very meritorious ſort of diſcipline under ſome Chriſtian Emperors, particularly *Conſtantine* and his ſons, it was greatly encouraged, and at laſt dignified with the pompous title of *Divine Philoſophy*.

If one conſiders the many childiſh fooleries and mad freaks, of which ſome who followed this unlucky ſyſtem of philoſophy were guilty, he will perhaps be ſurpriſed to find ſome of the greateſt names of Chriſtian antiquity, ſtriving to outvie one another in celebrating their praiſes: Such an uſeleſs race of fanatics may deſerve ſome pity, but ſurely not the ſmalleſt degree of eſteem.

We are told by two very grave authors, *Bede*, and *Adamnan*, the firſt an *Anglo-Saxon*, the latter a *Scotſman*, and Abbot of *Jona*, that ſome of the divine philoſophers of *Britain* wrought miracles: About a third part of *Columba*'s life, which

was written by *Adamnan*, is compoſed of theſe extravagant fictions. And the life of *St. Cuthbert*, with which *Bede* has favoured us in proſe and verſe, will furniſh both the credulous and unbelieving reader, with the higheſt entertainment of the ſame kind. But whither one chooſes to give faith to theſe and ſuch like miracles, or otherwiſe, we have occaſion to believe that the Monks of our iſland were a more rational and uſeful race of men, than the oriental recluſes, who were guilty of the moſt inexcuſable omiſſion of every ſocial virtue. Mean time, from that humour of mortification with which the whole tribe was univerſally poſſeſſed, in all the different quarters of the world, as well as from a thouſand paſſages of *Bede*'s hiſtory, we cannot but conclude that not a few of the *Engliſh* and *Scottiſh* monks, were ſuperſtitiouſly fond of ſolitary and remote places, fond of little iſles, fond of keeping their bodies under a cruel mortification.

But if Providence has ever deſigned any man for Monſkiſh auſterities, or if any part of the globe has been deſtined by nature for Hermits, undoubtedly *St. Kilda* muſt be one of theſe ſtations. It is hardly poſſible for the human imagination to frame an idea of a place better calculated for all the voluntary pennances of a religious ſelf tormentor, than this dreary and almoſt inacceſſible iſle: Here all the pernicious influence of evil company, all avocations from the great buſineſs of the ſpiritual life, all the flatteries of ſenſe and time, are almoſt totally excluded: and it was ſurely moſt natural, for a zealous *Devotee* of a gloomy ſoul, upon hearing the name of ſo uncomfortable a place, and ſo much out of the way of temptation, to fall deſperately fond of it, and to embrace the firſt opportunity of gratifying his ruling paſſion there.

Whither the firſt Monk who repaired to *St. Kilda*, was older than *Columba*, *Bridget*, *Patric*,

Patric, or *Palladius*, it is hard to determine; I think it is very probable that ſome of *Columba*'s diſciples were the firſt teachers of Chriſtianity there. That venerable man ſent one or more of his Monks, to convert the *Pagan* inhabitants of the *Orkney* iſlands, ſo we are told by *Adamnan*, in that Saint's life; and what could have hindred the ſame holy perſon from extending his paternal care to the iſles, which lay much nearer to his favorite *Jona*, and to *St. Kilda* among the reſt? One thing is certain that a temple has been dedicated to that illuſtrious Abbot there, which in the language of the place is called *Columbcille* to this day: It lies on the weſt ſide of the village, and has neither altar, croſs or cell within its precincts.

We are told by ſome *Iriſh* Legends, quoted by Dr. *Hanmer* in his chronicle of that kingdom, that *Columba* dedicated all the churches he built, either to *Chriſt* or

the *Trinity:* Such Legends are ſufficient evidences in a matter of that kind. *Bede*'s character of *Columba* and his diſciples, render the account they give of theſe churches extremely probable. According to that author *, theſe good men, as they were quite out of the world, were abſolute ſtrangers to the Synodical decrees that related to *Eaſter*, and practiſed only thoſe things with regard to godlineſs and chaſtity which they were able to find in the writings of the Prophets, Evangeliſts and Apoſtles.

Agreeable to this obſervation the largeſt church in *St. Kilda*, was dedicated to *Chriſt*, and is called his temple †. It was built of ſtone

* *Bede*, Hiſt. Eccleſ. lib. 3. cap. 4.

† To ſome proteſtants it will be, perhaps, matter of wonder, that the greateſt part of the churches in *Scotland*, as well as elſewhere, ſhould have been dedicated to Saints, male and female, rather than to Almighty God, or to the all-merciful Saviour of mankind.

ſtone, and without any cement: Its length is twenty-four feet, and its breadth fourteen. This was in former times the principal place of worſhip in the iſle, and here they continue to bury their dead.

In *St. Kilda*, at the diſtance of a mile from the village, and to the ſouth-weſt, there is a chapel, in the language of the place called *Brendan's* temple: It has an altar within, and ſome Monkiſh cells without it. Theſe are almoſt entire and muſt

kind. But theſe men muſt be entire ſtrangers to the real genius of Popery. Whether it be true or falſe that the devotion paid to Saints and Angels, is ultimately reſolved into the glory of the Supreme Being, it is certain that where the *Romiſh* ſuperſtition is firmly eſtabliſhed, and without controul, many more *Ave-Maria's* are repeated than *Pater-Noſters*; or in other words, that greater honour is paid to the creature than to the Creator, unleſs it can be ſaid with juſtice, that we affront the Father of mercies by addreſſing him too oft, or that men are guilty of an unpardonable preſumption, by approaching him without imploring the aſſiſtance of perſons to whom neither the goſpel nor our own reaſon adviſe or oblige us to have recourſe.

of conſequence be of later date, than the holy places dedicated to *Chriſt* and *Columba*.

Brendan, in the *Galic Brianin*, was an *Iriſh* Saint, and if we give credit to Legends, of which his country affords a very great ſtore, was a perſon deeply verſed in the liberal ſciences, and a great traveller: In the courſe of his peregrinations, which coſt him ſeveral years, he viſited the weſtern iſles of *Scotland*. Before his journey thither he became the Father of *three thouſand Monks*, who earned their bread with the labour of their own hands, agreeable to the faſhion of theſe more ſimple ages. This vaſt multitude of *Brendan*'s diſciples lived together in *Wales*; the good man himſelf was cotemporary with *Columba*. After having finiſhed his travels and labours in *Britain*, he returned at laſt to his native country, and died Biſhop of *Kerry* or *Ardfeart*.

Beſides

Beſides the more famous purgatory, which belonged to *St. Patric* in *Ireland*, there was another, though an ignoble one, comparatively ſpeaking, which was called after this *Brianin*: From this circumſtance we may conclude that his character muſt have been very high in that country. But however worthy he and others of the ſame credit for ſanctity, may have been of that glorious name; it is remarkable that in the ancient language of *North-Britain* and *Ireland*, neither *Brianin*, nor any one elſe of thoſe holy men, who were much ſuperior to him in merit, were dignified with the title of *Saint*; neither he, nor *Columba*, nor *Bridget*, nor *Patric*, no, nor the Apoſtles of *Jeſus*, had that very ſignificant word prefixed to their names in that tongue, while by thoſe who ſpoke the *Latin*, and the modern languages of *Europe*, this high title was in their great wiſdom very liberally diſpenſed: Nay ſometimes it has been moſt graciouſly given to imaginary beings, and in great numbers too, witneſs

St.

St. Urſula, and her *eleven thouſand virgins*; and what is ſtill worſe, though not more ridiculous, it has been moſt unjuſtly proſtituted to the worſt, or to the moſt fooliſh of men, by thoſe who had a very ſtrange right, *though a divine one*, to canonize whom, and to ſanctify what they thought fit *.

A great number of churches were conſecrated to *Brendan* in the weſtern iſles. In

* Had that church which pretends to have an exclusive right to the name, and will content herſelf with nothing leſs than *infallibility*, impoſed her arbitrary commands on her obſequious votaries, to adore thoſe Saints who have been undoubtedly tranſlated to the regions of glory, and them only, the plauſibility of the argument, or pretext with which ſhe endeavours to juſtify her practice, would ſurely appear much more to the advantage; but moſt abſurdly, though not unpolitically, the common mother of all Chriſtians obliges her children to give due worſhip (*debitus cultus*, ſaith the council of *Trent* very indeterminately) or as much of adoration as they pleaſe, not only to theſe, but to the ſouls of departed perſons, whoſe characters in life were either extreamly dubious, or remarkably ſcandalous.

Barra

Barra he had a little temple, and his image was to be ſeen there, ſome little time ago, dreſt up in linnen, and enriched with the unexpenſive donatives of many pins and uſeleſs needles. The more ſuperſtitious part of the people there held him in great veneration: One of the natives, more worldly minded, it ſeems, than religious, took the liberty to employ his ſpade on a little ſpot of ground near the Saint's temple, and on his own holy-day: A neighbour reproved him ſeverely for an act of impiety ſo daring. The ſinner being at work in a hollow, from which he could have no view of the chapel, nor one who ſtood there of him, anſwered ſcoffingly that *Brianin* could not poſſibly ſee him where he was employed. The Saint greatly provoked by this blaſphemous ſarcaſm, vindicated his injured honour, ſo tradition will have it, miraculouſly ſtriking the wicked infidel blind. After ſo ſignal a judgment, the greateſt unbeliever in *Barra* could hardly think of profaning a minute of the time devoted to a Saint ſo formidable and vengeful.

Bren-

Brendan's feſtival day was celebrated at *St. Kilda*, on the twenty-ſeventh of *May*, the ſixteenth of the ſame month was ſet apart for the ſame good purpoſe in the calendar. A blunder of the ſame kind has been committed by the people of this iſland, or by thoſe who framed that table of ſacred chronology. The day formerly obſerved at *St. Kilda*, in commemoration of *St. Columba*, was the ſixteenth of *June*, in the calendar it falls upon the ninth. Here is a contradiction which many will call a matter of not the ſmalleſt importance. But thoſe who have read the unedifying hiſtory of the diſputes, with regard to the exact time of celebrating the paſchal feſtival, diſputes which produced the moſt unchriſtian animoſities, and a ſchiſm which ſix whole centuries were hardly able to cure, muſt be ſenſible that a controverſy of this kind would have been once thought a moſt ſerious affair.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

The ſame ſubject continued.

THE *St. Kildians* are too wiſe or too good proteſtants, to neglect their ſecular affairs on the feſtival days of *Columba* and *Brendan*. During the reign of Popery they paid extraordinary honours to theſe two Saints, and abſtained religiouſly from the more heavy drudgeries of agriculture, taking care at the ſame time to give due attention to other important affairs.

In thoſe Highland diſtricts where the *Romiſh* ſuperſtition continue to prevail, the people of that communion, though hindred by the laws of their church, from toiling at the plough, ſpade and ſickle in thoſe holy ſeaſons, either have or take a diſpenſation to employ their time uſefully in twenty other branches of rural buſineſs.

This

This lucky expedient by which religion and the world are judiciouſly blended together, Chriſtian *Rome* has, like many more of her inſtitutions and cuſtoms, borrowed from her *Pagan* mother. The Prince of *Latin* poets has informed us, that the ſwains of his country were permitted on ſacred days to drain their fields, if overflown, to fence their corn with hedges, to lay ſnares for birds, to burn thorns or brambles, to waſh the bleating flock in the ſalubrious brook, and to carry oil and fruit to the market *.

On the days devoted to the memory of *Columba* and *Brendan* at *St. Kilda*, all the milk of the Common-wealth, is with a moſt ſcrupulous exactneſs delivered up into the hands of the ſteward or his deputy, who diſtributes the whole without any partia-

* " Quippe etiam feſtis quædam exercere diebus
" Fas & juræ ſinunt. Rivos deducere nulla
" Religio vetuit, ſegeti pretendere ſæpem,
" Inſidias avibus moliri, incendere vepres
" Balantumque gregem fluvio merſere ſalubri.
VIRG. GEORG. I. v. 268, & ſeq.

lity,

lity, every man, woman and child, receiving indiſcriminately an equal portion.

One can only pretend to conjecture, by whom, and at what time, this annual and now unexampled cuſtom, has been introduced into this iſland. We are told by *Bede* that ſome of the *Britiſh* Monks had every thing in common. It is probable that thoſe of *Jona* may have followed the ſame cuſtom, in imitation of their neighbours, or perhaps in conformity to the practice of the Saints at *Jeruſalem*, in the Apoſtolic times. It is probable at leaſt, that upon extraordinary or ſtated occaſions, theſe good men would have followed the primitive faſhion of celebrating the *Agapæ*, or love feaſts, wherein all the diſtinctions of high and low, rich and poor, old and young, were wholly laid aſide. It is true theſe love feaſts, though inſtituted for very good purpoſes, having given occaſion to great abuſes, not to ſay ſcandalous exceſſes, were at laſt aboliſhed every where:

where: But as the people of *St. Kilda* were in no great danger of running into debaucheries, and as their teachers were, perhaps, unacquainted with the new law which abrogated the old cuſtom, I ſee little reaſon for doubting, that ſome one of thoſe honeſt old faſhioned men would have given the ſanction of his authority to a practice perfectly innocent, in a place ſo much out of the way of vice and all the exceſſes of intemperance.

I ſhall have occaſion to ſhow in the ſequel, that *Culdees*, one or more, muſt have viſited this iſland in ſome diſtant period. We are told by the learned *Sir James Dalrymple*, in his collections concerning the *Scottiſh* hiſtory, that thoſe of that order had ſome things in common, and the reſt in property*. This he proves from an old regiſter of the priory of *St. Andrews*. What things the *Culdees* had in common, and what otherwiſe, cannot be eaſily deter-

* Dalrymple's Collect. chap. 7.

mined

mined at this diſtance of time. But that ſome one of that denomination muſt have preſcribed the rule, hitherto obſerved by the *St. Kildians*, with regard to their milk or annual love feaſts, is perfectly credible: and that theſe men had a particular regard for *Columba*, and *Brendan*, appears from the honour done them in that way.

Beſides the two holy-days already mentioned, the people of this iſland obſerve four more, *Chriſtmas*, the firſt day of the new year, *Eaſter* and *Michaelmas*. On the two firſt of theſe anniverſaries, they eat the beſt things their land affords, drink very liberally, and dance with great ſkill and agility. On *Eaſter-Sunday* they are rather very grave, than like others in the humour of enjoying the gratifications of life. At *Michaelmas* the ableſt horſemen among them, ride their little high mettled nags, like ſo many *Numidians* or old *Britains*,

without ſaddles, ſtirrups or bridles. Thoſe who diſtinguiſh themſelves in theſe races, are ſupremely happy in the rewards of glory and honour which they obtain, tho' ſtrangers to the royal-plates of the moderns, and the palm crowns of ancient times.

It was, till of late, an univerſal cuſtom among the iſlanders on *Michaelmas-day*, to prepare in every family a loaf or cake of bread, enormouſly large, and compounded of different ingredients. This cake belonged to the Arch-angel, and had its name from him. Every one in each family, whether ſtrangers or domeſtics, had his portion of this kind of ſhew-bread, and had of courſe ſome title to the friendſhip and protection of *Michael*. In *Ireland* a ſheep was killed in every family that could afford one, on the ſame anniverſary, and it was ordained by law, that a part of it ſhould be given to the poor.

This

This and a great deal more was done in that kingdom, to perpetuate the memory of a ſignal miracle wrought there by *St. Patrick*, through the aſſiſtance of the Archangel, who appeared to the holy man in the ſhape of a dove: Undoubtedly *Michael*'s aid was neceſſary on that great occaſion. The Saint had a young *Hibernian* Prince, the ſon of *Leogarius*, and a very pious queen, to raiſe from the dead. This was effectually done; and in commemoration of this ſtupendous action, *Michaelmas* was inſtituted a feſtal day of joy, plenty, and univerſal benevolence *.

I have already made mention of one *St. Kilda* altar, that in *Brendan*'s Chapel. There are no leſs than four more in the iſland, of which three lie at conſiderable diſtances from the holy places. There is one particularly on the top of a hill to the ſouth-weſt, dedicated according to tradition to the God who preſides over Seaſons: The

* Keating's Gen. Hiſt. of Irel. B. II. p. 12.

God of thunder, lightening, tempeſts and fair weather. To avert the terrible judgments inflicted by this mighty Divinity, the ancient *St. Kildians* offered propitiatory ſacrifices on this altar, ſacrifices of different ſorts, much like the old *Pagans*, who offered a black ſheep to Winter, or the Tempeſt, and a white one to the Spring, or propitious Zephyrs *.

I am apt to believe that this *St. Kilda* idol, was the *Taranis* of the *Celtic* nations. I am the more confirmed in this opinion, as there is an iſle on the coaſt of *Harris*, oppoſite to the place where this idolatry was practiſed, remarkably ſubject to tempeſtuous weather, and it muſt have borrowed its name from this wild and formidable Deity. The iſle is called *Taranſey*. To derive this name from *St. Taran*, an imaginary being, like ſome others of the Cæleſtial Hierarchy, is in my appre-

* Nigram Hyæmi pecudem, Zephyris felicibus albam.
VIRGIL.

apprehenſion, one of thoſe chimæras which every ingenious man will ſometimes create to himſelf and others. Should it be aſked how the *St. Kildians* became acquainted with the *Taranis* of *Paganiſm*, I anſwer, that this terrible Deity was worſhiped by all the Celtic nations, and from ſome one of theſe, that little people muſt have derived their origin. I add further, that the *Danes* and *Norwegians*, were heathens for a long time after they began to infeſt the *Britannic* iſlands, and it is certain that they were poſſeſſed of all the *Ebudes* for ſeveral centuries, and conſequently of *St. Kilda*.

The place where the people of this iſland, offered their victims to *Taranis*, is called *Mulach-geall*, that is to ſay, the White eminence or hill, a name of exactly the ſame import with *Apenninus* of *Italy*; as the *Penrith* of *South-Britain*, in the land of the ancient *Brigantes*, is the ſame in its meaning with *Ruaimhaill*, or Red-hill of *St. Kilda*.

The eaſtern nations performed their ſuperſtitious rites, on the more ſolemn occaſions, upon the tops of mountains. Every one has read or heard of the high places, ſo frequently mentioned in the Old Teſtament. The barbarous heathens of the North adopted the ſame cuſtom. All theſe nations were ignorant enough to imagine, that their Gods would hear and ſee them upon theſe eminences much better than in the lower grounds. That they were nearer Heaven in this ſituation, might be ſaid with ſome plauſibility. The privacy and remoteneſs of ſuch places, was the beſt argument that could have been urged to juſtify the practice.

In the face of another hill that lies directly in the road, from the *St. Kilda* village to the valley on the north-weſt ſide, there is a very large ſtone, white and ſquare, on which they formerly poured, on the Sundays, *libations of milk*, to a ſubordinate Divinity, whoſe name was *Gruagach*. Ac-

cording

cording to the belief of ſome weak, ſuperſtitiouſly inclined perſons in the iſlands, this *Gruagach* was a good humoured, ſportive and placable Deity. He was likewiſe very moderate in his demands; a ſmall tribute of milk, when eaſily ſpared, the milk of a ſingle cow in Summer or Autumn, was enough to conciliate his friendſhip. The name of this God ſignifies, in the *Galic* tongue, one with fine hair or long treſſes.

The learned need not be told, that an epithet of exactly the ſame meaning was given by the *Greeks* and *Romans* to *Apollo*, and *Apollo* was once the cowherd of *Admetus* King of *Theſſaly* or *Pheræ*: It ſeems plain, from an inſcription dug up near *Edinburgh*, about two centuries ago, that this Deity was worſhiped by the *Britons*, under the title, or additional name, of *Grannus*. The Curious may ſee the inſcription in *Cambden's Britannia*, and in the article *Gadeni*. That excellent antiquary conjectures very ingeniouſly, that *Grannus* is a

Celtic word, which ſignifies one with remarkably good hair. To ſupport this fancy, he quotes a paſſage from *Iſidore*, which ſhows that the long hair of the *Goths* were called *Granni*. I add, that in the ancient language of this country, *Graine* conveys the very ſame idea: Admitting therefore *Cambden*'s conjecture, *Grannus* and *Gruagach* are vocables of the ſame import; and as the two words are equivalent in ſenſe, ſo it is to be remembered, that the *libations* ſet apart for the *Gruagach* were offered to him on the day conſecrated to the ſun.

A little above the ſacred ſtone now deſcribed, (and it may be obſerved that there was a *Grugach* ſtone, in almoſt every village throughout the weſtern iſles) there is a little green plain, which the *St. Kildians* call *Liani-nin-ore*, that is to ſay the plain of *ſpells*, *exorciſms*, or *prayers*, *ore* being derived from the *Latin* word *oro*. Here the old *St. Kildians* implored the bleſſing of

of their God on their cattle, and here they luſtrated or ſanctified theſe cattle with *ſalt*, *water* and *fire*, every time they were removed from one grazing place to another. By the virtue of this ceremony they conjured away, ſo they fondly thought, the power of faſcinations, the malignity of elves, and the vengeance of every evil genius.

The wiſer and more learned nations of *Greece* and *Italy*, made uſe of fire, ſulphur, and holy-water for much the ſame purpoſes; and ſomething quite analogous to the *St. Kilda* ſuperſtition, was practiſed every year by the *Fratres Arvales* of *Rome*, as well as by every huſbandman in *Latium*. *Tibullus* is pretty full on this ſubject*; and I know not whether it be quite unneceſſary to add, that the ſame fine writer informs us likewiſe, (*Ovid* does the ſame) that milk libations were offered by the *Romans* to the Gods and Goddeſs of cattle.

* Lib. II. Eleg. 1.

Below

Below the field of *Spells* and *Luſtrations* there is another beautiful ſpot, tolerably extenſive, and in appearance fertile. The people are obſtinately averſe to turn it up for corn, being poſſeſſed with a ſtrong belief, that the ſpot ought to be kept inviolably ſacred, and that ſuch a bold incroachment on it would be infallibly attended with the loſs of their boat, or ſome other public calamity. They have forgotten the name of the Divinity to whom this ground belongs; but like the old *Athenians*, and ſome other nations, they are determined at all adventures to worſhip their *unknown God*.

I was at ſome pains to reaſon and ridicule them out of this abſurd fancy, but to little purpoſe. They appealed firſt to the ſad experience of their predeceſſors, and afterwards eluded my arguments, by maintaining, with a violent obſtinacy, that the produce of this ſpot, if tilled, could never balance the expence. In ſhort, if any one

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excepting the Steward, ſhould preſume to turn this ſacred plot, I am perſuaded that the *St. Kildians*, would, with a much more honeſt zeal, ſeek their revenge on ſo impious a perſon, than *Philip of Macedon* and his confederates, did on the irreligious or greedy *Phocæans*, for their ſacrilegious encroachments on the *Delphic God* in his holy-land.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

Of the ſacred fountains of St. Kilda. Culdees *once there.* Hirta, *the true name of that Iſland.*

THE fountain water of *St. Kilda*, is beyond compariſon the fineſt I ever taſted, and one will eaſily find inexhauſtable quantities of it in every corner of that iſle. In this reſpect the natives have a very conſiderable advantage over their neighbours in ſome parts of the *Long-Iſland*. Of theſe, many are under the hard neceſſity of ſupplying their wants with a moſt diſagreeable ſort of water, which they either draw out of ſtanding pools, or ſkim away from off the ſurface of ſome little ſcanty ſprings, which are ſtrongly impregnated with ſalt, and very apt to dry up in the ſummer ſeaſon. The places where theſe men find it convenient to build their houſes, are generally very near the coaſt

coaſt of the weſtern ocean, and are almoſt in a level with it, ſo that the fountains which their hills produce, are ſwallowed up in the many lakes with which the country is overſpread, or loſt in deep moraſſes, before they come down to the ſea-ſide. —In *St. Kilda*, the ground is otherwiſe contrived. The hills are exceſſively high, and almoſt perpetually covered with clouds. It will be naturally expected, that the water which flows down from theſe muſt be clear, ſweet and copious, after it is filtrated through rocks, conſtantly ſupplied from a never-failing ſource, and not in the ſmalleſt degree adulterated, by any thing that can render it diſagreeable or noxious.

In this iſland are three conſecrated wells, which have been held in the greateſt veneration of old. Of theſe the moſt remarkable is that near the *Camper*, or crooked bay. It is undoubtedly a very noble fountain. They call it *Tobirnimbuadh*, or the *Spring of diverſe virtues*. During the reign

of

of *Popery*, the *St. Kildians* paid a kind of religious adoration to it, from a very ſerious perſuaſion that the water had obtained ſome extraordinary benediction, and in conſequence of that, had virtue enough to perform miraculous cures. Among the lower claſſes of mankind, it is hardly poſſible to conquer, or totally eradicate thoſe ſuperſtitious prepoſſeſſions which have the ſanction of antiquity, eſpecially if confirmed by ſome lucky accidents, which ſeem to juſtify the belief of former ages. Weak and illiterate men will be ever ready to entertain prejudices of that kind with the profoundeſt reſpect. Some little time ago, a perſon long afflicted with a diſtemper, which had defeated the ſkill of all the people about him, took it in his head to go from *Harris* to *St. Kilda*, upon a ſort of religious *Pilgrimage*. His meaning was, to lay his grievance before the patron of this fountain.

It was once a fundamental article of faith in this iſle, that the water here was a ſovereign cure for a great variety of diſtempers, deafneſs particularly, and every nervous diſeaſe. Near the fountain ſtood an altar, on which the diſtreſſed votaries laid down their oblations. Before they could touch the ſacred water, with any proſpect of ſucceſs, it was their conſtant practice to addreſs the Genius of the place with ſupplication and prayer. No one approached him with empty hands. But the devotees were abundantly frugal: The offerings preſented by them, were the pooreſt acknowledgements that could be made to a ſuperior Being, from whom they had either hopes or fears. Shells and pebbles, rags of linen or ſtuffs worn out, pins, needles, or ruſty nails, were generally all the tribute that was paid; and ſometimes, though rarely enough, copper coins of the ſmalleſt value. Very frequently the whole expence of the ſacrifice was no more than ſome one of the little common

ſtones that happened to be in the Pilgrim's way. In the memory of our fathers ſome injudicious Proteſtants, who retained more or leſs of the old leaven, made a practice of leaving ſuch trifling donatives near the fountains in the other weſtern iſles, I mean thoſe which were in every one of them dedicated to ſome one Saint, Angel or Divinity, to the *Lord*, to *Chriſt*, to the *Virgin Mary*, to *St. Columba*, *St. Cuthbert*, *&c.* or *Michael*. But we have great reaſon to doubt, that the donations made in the days of Prieſt-craft and credulity, by thoſe well meaning believers, who had recourſe to ſuch miraculous waters, were equally inſignificant.

This part of what is called the old religion, was undoubtedly borrowed, like many more, from *the Pagan Theology*. Among the Heathens of *Italy*, and other countries, every choice fountain was conſecrated, and ſacrifices were offered to them, as well as to the Deities who preſided over them.

Ovid

Ovid informs us *, that the religious King *Numa* offered a ſheep to a ſacred ſpring, of which ſcarce any had leave to drink, excepting two rural Divinities, *Faunus* and *Picus*. *Horace*, though none of the moſt ſuperſtitious men, in compliance ſurely with the practice of the times and country in which he lived, made a ſolemn promiſe, in a beautiful little ode, which has immortalized the ſubject of it, that he would make a preſent of a very fine kid, ſome ſweet wine, and flowers, to a noble fountain in his own *Sabine Villa*. Whether the Lyric Poet ſpoke ſeriouſly on this occaſion, or indulged his ſportive vein, it is ſuperfluous to quote any more inſtances.

Some Chriſtians, either over zealous, or too little acquainted with the ſpirit of their own religion, or perhaps more in love with the wiſdom of the ſerpent, than with the

* Faſt. Lib. III. at. 300. Fonti Reſe Numa mactat ovem.

innocence of the dove, found out the uſe which thoſe of their perſuaſion might make of miraculous fountains, as well as the *Pagans*. *Licinius Mucianus*, once the rival and afterwards the friend of *Veſpaſian*, ſaw, if we muſt believe *Pliny* the elder, a notable ſpring in the iſland of *Andros*, which furniſhed a very conſiderable quantity of wine upon certain occaſions. This might indeed have happened, under the direction of ſome wiſe managers. It would have been an everlaſting diſgrace to our religion, that Heathens could have outdone us in working ſigns and wonders: Therefore a famous enough Chriſtian Biſhop, no leſs a man than *St. Epiphanius*, ſaw another ſpring of the ſame extraordinary kind, which ſpouted out, though not at all times, I know not how much of the ſame precious liquor. But ſtreams and whole rivers of wine are nothing at all, however deſireable, if compared to bodily health; and that ineſtimable bleſſing, if given by a

Saint who preſides over a fountain, ſhould contribute more to devotion than the miracle ſeen by the holy father, and ſhould of courſe turn out more to the advantage of the prieſts engaged in the ſervice of ſo uſeful a Saint.

The ſecond holy well at *St. Kilda* is below the village, and guſhes out like a torrent from the face of a rock. At every full tide the ſea overflows it, but how ſoon that ebbs away, nothing can be freſher or ſweeter than the water. The natives call it *Toberi Clerich.* In the *Galic* tongue, *Clerich* ſignifies the ſame thing with *Clerk* in *Engliſh*, and both theſe vocables are a corruption of the word *Clericus* in Eccleſiaſtical *Latin.* The Highlanders ſometimes expreſs the low office of a *Bedler*, by the word *Clerich:* The original reaſon, I ſuppoſe, was this. The Prieſts ſervant was in the dark ages of *Popery* reckoned a ſcholar, and perhaps next to his maſter, one of the profoundeſt in a whole land, as he was

taught to repeat ſome little ſcraps of a *Latin* Miſſal, by way of making reſponſes: But as the famous *Columba* was in the weſtern Highlands and iſles, called the Clerk by way of eminence, or to ſpeak in the language of that country, *Calum Clerich*, I am apt to believe that the excellent *St. Kilda* fountain, now deſcribed, had the honour of being called after that celebrated ſcholar and divine. Buried as it is under the ſea, no leſs than twice in every twenty-four hours, its water is never brackiſh in the ſmalleſt degree. It was natural enough for the *St. Kildians* to imagine, that ſo extraordinary a phænomenon, muſt have been the effect of ſome ſupernatural cauſe; and one of their teachers would have probably aſſured them, that *Columba* the great Saint of their iſland, and a mighty worker of miracles, had deſtroyed the influence, which, according to the eſtabliſhed laws of nature, the ſea ſhould have had on that water. I had almoſt forgotten to obſerve, that the Saint,

Angel

Angel or Deity, to whom the wonder working *Tobernimbuadh* pertained, is now an unknown Being, his name having been long ago buried in oblivion.

The third ſacred fountain at *St. Kilda*, is near the heart of the village, and is of univerſal uſe to the community. The water of it is ſweet, light and clear like cryſtal. The people give it the name of *Tober Childa Chalda*.

Martin in his deſcription of the weſtern iſles informs us, that this remote place derives the name, under which it goes in the *Engliſh* language, from one *Kilder* who lived there. I wiſh that gentleman, as his curioſity was great, and in my opinion laudable enough, had found out and told his reader, what this man's character and office were, whether a Layman or Eccleſiaſtic, at what time he lived, and why the iſle borrowed its name from him. For my ſhare I am not ſufficiently converſant with

hiſtory, civil or eccleſiaſtical, to find out that this ſame *Kilder* or *Kilda*, ever exiſted here or any where elſe; and the preſent inhabitants of the iſland are abſolute ſtrangers to this their imaginary Patron or Hero. We read indeed of a famous enough female Saint whoſe name was *Kilda* *. This pious woman, in the infancy of the *Saxon* church, made a conſiderable figure. She founded the Abbey of *Whitley* †, wrought ſundry miracles, if any old tradition deſerves any credit, transformed ſerpents into ſtones, which retain their original form in ſome degree to this day; by the mighty power of her prayers entailed an everlaſting curſe on the wild geeſe, that infeſted the fields pertaining to the monaſtery, a curſe fatal to theſe ſacrilegious creatures; and what redounds more to her honour, than ten thouſand feats of that kind, oppoſed with all her ſtrength, the encroachments made by the *Romiſh* Miſſio-

* *Bed.* Hiſt. Eccleſ. Lib. III. cap. 24, and 25.

† *Camb.* Brit. p. 89. 906.

naries

naries on the liberties of the *Britiſh* Churches. But that either the name of this holy woman, or the fame of her miracles, have travelled to *St. Kilda*, is abſolutely improbable, eſpecially as we find no veſtiges of the firſt, nor any notion of the laſt, in any other part of this kingdom.

Gildas is an old *Britiſh* writer, of whom all the learned have heard; he ſeems to have been a very pious man, if peeviſhneſs and ill-nature can be reconciled with that character. That he has been dignified with the title of Saint, I am not able to recollect. We are told by ſome that he was born near *Dumbarton*; but he was far from being fond of thoſe who dwelt near that place in his time, I mean the *Scots*; and had he been in a more friendly diſpoſition, with regard to our nation, it is hardly poſſible to imagine, that the reformers, teachers or people of *St. Kilda*, had any connection with him, or the ſmalleſt veneration for his name.

That the antient Clergy of this kingdom were called *Culdees*, *Colide*, *Keledei* and *Kaledei*, is plain beyond contradiction. Our hiſtorians tell us ſo, and ſome of theſe had no party intereſt to ſerve in that matter. In vain has it been objected, that neither *Bede* nor *Nennius* have made any the leaſt mention of theſe old Eccleſiaſtics. The word *Keledei* is a *Galic* vocable, and why ſhould either of theſe writers ſpeak of the old *Scottiſh* or *Pictiſh* Clergy under a *Gallic* name, unleſs they had a mind to give ſome ſpecimens of their ſkill in that language, which they have both done with very little ſucceſs in ſome other inſtances.

The original and genuine name of the Chriſtian teachers in *North-Britain* was *Gille-Dee*, that is to ſay, the ſervants or miniſters of God, an appellation or title extremely proper; and this name has been hitherto preſerved in its firſt purity, in one of the *Argyleſhire* iſlands, which was im-

pro-

propriated for one or more of that order, by the piety of theſe times. Another new tribe of Eccleſiaſtics, whoſe power became at laſt irreſiſtibly ſtrong, exerted all their furious zeal and wicked induſtry, to exterminate this more uſeful or innocent order of God's ſervants; and long before that ſelfiſh project was carried into execution, their true name or antient title paſſing through the mouths of men, who were ſtrangers to the language out of which it had been formed, was corrupted firſt into *Keledes*, and afterwards learnedly turned into *Colides*, or *Cultores Dei*, of which words *Culdee* is a contraction.

All that is further neceſſary to be obſerved is, that the learned *Dr. Lhoyd* of *St. Aſaph*, who has been at ſo much pains to bring this order of men into contempt, was conſtrained by the power of truth to acknowledge that we had Clergymen in *Scotland*, under the denomination of *Culdees*, after the time of *Bede* and *Nennius*.

This

This being admitted, it is ſurely not unreaſonable to believe, that the zealous Abbots of *Jona* would have ſent one or more of that order and name to *St. Kilda*, with a deſign of converting, or further inſtructing the people there; and one may very rationally ſuppoſe that a *Culdee*, monaſtically given, would have been irreſiſtibly prompted, by a pious ambition, to go thither ſpontaneouſly. A perſon of that profeſſion, who inclined to enjoy the benefit of a very remote hermitage, to go through a courſe of meritorious auſterities, to indulge his melancholy humour in a ſedentary life, or to promote the ſpiritual happineſs of a moſt ignorant and helpleſs race of mortals, could not poſſibly think of a more deſireable place. One of that dark complexion, and under the influence of ſuch principles, would have been much admired in this iſland; and as he would, perhaps, have religiouſly piqued himſelf upon drinking nothing elſe but water, like the oriental *Anchoretes*, the fountain near which he had his

his cell, and which ſatisfied his very moderate deſires, would have very probably been called after him; and as this *Culdee* muſt have been a ſtranger, and every ſtranger from the remote parts of *Britain*, eſpecially if unacquainted with their own language, is ſtiled *Gaul* or *Gauldie* by the Highlanders, the man's common deſignation would have been *Gille Dee Gauldie*, and the fountain in honour of him, called *Tobir Childe Chaldie*, or nearly ſo. I ſhall have occaſion in another place, to ſhow that the *St. Kildians* have either a peculiar imperfection in their organs of ſpeech, or have at leaſt a moſt incorrect way of pronouncing, ſo that an infinite number of words which belong to their own native tongue, are entirely perverted by them, or ſpoiled in the ſound. This being the caſe, it is far from being matter of wonder that they ſhould have corrupted the words *Tober Ghille Dee Ghaueldie*, into *Tober Childie Chauldie*, as all nations have committed

a thouſand grammatical faults of the ſame kind.

Whether this conjecture ſtand or fall, is a matter of not the ſmalleſt conſequence. But from the name of the fountain, which gave me ſome encouragement to offer it, the iſland was in all probability termed *St. Kilda*, though of late only. Some one who would fain have been thought wiſer or more learned than his neighbours, upon hearing the fountain, now under conſideration, called *Tobir Childa*, concluded immediately, partly with reaſon and partly without any, that the perſon from whom it derived that appellation was a Saint, that his proper name was *Kilda*, and that the iſland ſhould ever after be ſtiled *St. Kilda* after him, rather than carry the *Gothic* inharmonious name of *Hirt* any longer.

I am ſenſible enough, that etymological diſcuſſions are little regarded by the gene-

rality of readers, and am ſo likewiſe, that the concluſions drawn from them, though wrought off with a great expence of erudition and fancy, are oft enough raſh, abſurd, and full of uncertainty. The etymon of our countries name, *Britannia*, has exerciſed the imagination, judgment, and pens of very learned men. Of theſe one has derived the word from the *Phœnician* language, ſome from the *Latin*, a few from the *Iriſh*, and others from the antient *Celtic*. All theſe antiquaries and critics may be miſtaken, and undoubtedly the moſt of them are ſo. This being evidently the caſe, what I am to advance in two or three ſucceſſive pages, may ſignify very little, or perhaps leſs than nothing; any one therefore who will condeſcend to peruſe theſe ſheets, and happens to have no taſte for etymological conjectures, eſpecially where *St. Kilda* is the ſubject, may run forward to the beginning of a new chapter, without ſtopping here any longer.

The

The true name of the iſland we have been deſcribing is *Hirt*. That of *St. Kilda* is a modern one, and ſo far as I could diſcover, ſcarce one hundred and fifty years old. *Buchanan* calls it *Hirta*, and *Cambden*, perhaps more juſtly, *Hyrtha*. The earlieſt mention made of it in any paper now extant is, I apprehend, in a charter granted by *John*, Lord of the Iſles, to his ſon *Reginald*, and confirmed by King *Robert* the Second, after the middle of the fourteenth century. In that charter the iſland, now called *St. Kilda*, goes under the name of *Hyrt*.

Tacitus, in his excellent little book concerning *Germany*, and the manners of its inhabitants *, obſerves, that ſeven different nations there, and the *Angles* made one of theſe, worſhiped one Deity in common, a Deity whoſe name was *Herthus*, which he

* In commune *Herthum*, id eſt, *Terram Matrem* colunt, eamque intervenire rebus hominum, invehi populis arbitrantur.

him-

himſelf explains by *Terram Matrem*, in *Engliſh*, Mother Earth. The *Saxons*, or the poſterity of the *Angles* before mentioned, have imported the ſame word, *Herthus*, into *South-Britain*, leaving out the *Latin* termination only. Every one knows that the vocable, Earth, is uſed in that country to expreſs the well known idea which the *Romans* affixed to their word *Terra*. Should any one ſay, with *Juſtus Lipſius*, that *Tacitus* ought to have written *Erthum* without the aſpiration; another very able critic *, I mean *Boxhornius*, will inform him that the true orthography of the word, among the antient *Germans*, was *Herta*, *Herda*, or *Herdi*.

The remains of the ten thouſand *Greeks* under *Xenophon*, after having at laſt overcome the dangers and fatigues of the ſevereſt cam-

* At *Hertam* ſcripſerunt veteres Germani, Antiquiſſimæ illæ Gloſſæ noſtræ, *Solum*, *Herda*, *Herdi*. Itaque nihil hic mutandum. *Boxhornius*.

Vide *Tacit.* de Mor. Germ. cap. 40. Edit. *Gronovii*.

paign

paign recorded in hiſtory, upon diſcovering the ſea from the mountains of *Paphlagonia*, cried out in a ſtrong tranſport of joy; *The Sea, the Sea*; nor could any thing have been more natural. But now, ſhould we ſuppoſe with venerable *Bede*, that a band of adventurers from *Scythia*, or what is much the ſame thing from *Germany* or *Scandinavia*, had been driven about through the northern ocean for ſome time, and after a very hard ſtruggle againſt the ſevereſt diſtreſſes, had the unexpected ſatisfaction to ſee land at laſt, it would have been ſurely no leſs natural for them to ſay, with the ſame tone of voice and exultation of ſoul, *Hert, Hert*, or Land, Land.

To ſay nothing of *Bede*'s more antient *Picts*, who had been driven about by unfavourable winds, according to the tradition which furniſhed him with that ſtory, till they arrived in *Hibernia*; we know with certainty, that *Norvegians* and *Danes* infeſted each ſide of this kingdom, for a

courſe

courſe of ages. Some of theſe rovers, if driven forward by north-eaſt winds, after having loſt their courſe, or after having left *Schetland* behind them, would have naturally ſpied out *St. Kilda* ſooner than any other place in the *Deucaledonian* ocean, as the rock and hills there are higher than any where elſe, and upon making ſo agreeable a diſcovery, would have very probably cried out, *Hert*, *Hert*; nor is it an extravagant conceit to ſuppoſe, that this ſmall land might for that very reaſon have retained the name ever after. One need not be ſurpriſed that this place ſhould have been diſtinguiſhed in the *Gothic* tongue by an appellative, inſtead of a proper name. The ſame thing has been done in other languages. *Britain* was of old called *Albion*, whether one chuſe to derive that name from the *Hebrew*, *Phœnician*, *Greek*, or *Latin*, and learned men have had recourſe to all theſe languages in giving the etymon of it; or to ſpeak in other words, whether we draw it from the whiteneſs of

its cliffs, from the height of the grounds, or from its fertility in producing the beſt grain, it is plain, that the ſame name might, for the very ſame reaſons, have been given to many other regions. Every one knows the word, *Water*, is far from being a proper name, by which one river may be diſcriminated from another. But how many rivers have been diſtinguiſhed of old, by an appellative of exactly the ſame ſignification. *Dur* in the *Celtic*, is equivalent to the *Engliſh* word *Water*; and yet we find that a famous river in *Spain* had no other name, than that of *Durius*, as two more in the *Alpine* regions were called *Duria*. In the *Britiſh* and *Scotch* languages, *Avion* ſignifies a river, and *Uiſk* water. For that reaſon, and for it only, many rivers in *England* and *Scotland*, have been in antient times known only under the general denominations of *Avon* and *Iſe*, *Eſk* or rather *Uiſk*; nor have theſe indefinite names been entirely deſtroyed through time.

To

To this I ſhall add, that there is a well known promontory in *Devonſhire*, called *Hert-neſs*, whoſe name is evidently compounded out of two *Saxon* or *Daniſh* words, *Hert* and *Neſs*, both together ſignifying the lands end, and both agreeing in ſenſe with *Kintire*, the *Galic* and *Britiſh* name of a diſtrict in the weſtern parts of *Scotland*.

CHAP. VII.

Boreray *and* Soay *deſcribed. An Account of the Land Animals there, and in the principal Iſland.*

AT the diſtance of two leagues from *Hirta*, and directly north from it, lies another iſle called *Boreray*, which is more than an *Engliſh* mile in circumference. It is ſurrounded with perpendicular rocks of prodigious height, two landing places only excepted. One of theſe rocks is almoſt as high as the famous *Conagra*. I ſtood on the top of this pile, half giddy, and ſupported by two of the natives. The proſpect we had before us, and the attitude in which we ſurveyed it, clouded my eyes with a ſort of darkneſs.

To behold a boundleſs ocean in all the wildneſs of its grandeur, and to ſtand at the

the ſame time on the brink of an immenſe precipice, againſt which mountain-like billows exert their whole ſtrength and fury, muſt ſtrike any new obſerver with admiration, aſtoniſhment, and ſome kind of ſolicitous awe. My people had not the reſolution to advance far enough to examine this amazing object. Their terror was to *St. Kildians* a very diverting ſcene.

Our walk from the boat to the top of the rock, was far from being long, but ſo ſteep was the aſcent that we found ourſelves under the neceſſity of reſting three different times.

In our return we were conducted by a decrepid, half blind creature, who with a conſiderable burden on his back, ſtrutted before us with a very ſolemn port, proud of his ſuperior agility, and laughing moſt heartily at the awkward motions of the ſtrangers.

It is impoſſible to travel here, or through the adjacent rocks, without putting off ones ſhoes; theſe being juſtly accounted great incumbrances, are left behind in the boat: The people cover their feet with ſockets made of cloth, and ſewed with feathers. It is needleſs to explain the reaſon why.

All the graſs in *Boreray* is exceſſively fine and very thick, though too ſhort. There is a plot of it which conſiſts entirely of ſorrel, like that in the *Campar* of *Hirta*. The whole iſle ſupports about four hundred ſheep, and theſe are remarkably prolific. I have ſaid remarkably ſo for this plain reaſon, among others, that the ſheep which are worn out of their fecundity in the main iſland, if tranſported thither, will bear for a courſe of years. Here is a demonſtration that the graſs is peculiarly good, and of an impregnating quality, if I may ſo expreſs it

At *Boreray* there is a vaſt number of the little conical houſes, for preſerving eggs and wild fowl.

But the greateſt curioſities here are, the romantic building already deſcribed, I mean the *Staller*'s houſe, and the *Druidical* place of worſhip.

To the weſt of *Hirta*, within a ſmall diſtance, lies a third iſle, called *Soay*, of much the ſame extent with *Boreray*, in which there are five hundred ſheep. Theſe belong to the ſteward, as thoſe of the iſle juſt now deſcribed, are the property of his vaſſals.

The rugged face of this iſland makes it very difficult to catch the ſheep, either to ſhear, or bring them to *Hirta*. To purſue ſuch wild creatures through declivities terminated by the deep, or into the ſhelves of vaſt rocks, is undoubtedly an adventure no

leſs perilous than bold. The *St. Kildians* are perhaps the only men in the univerſe equal to it, and ſhould any one fancy that their amazing intrepidity on ſuch occaſions, muſt be reſolved into neceſſity, the rage of hunger or the dread of abſolute power, he muſt permit me to think and affirm, that the love of glory is in many caſes the great and only ſpring of theſe deſperate enterpriſes. In *St. Kilda*, feats of this kind are deemed heroic actions, and no leſs ſo, than to mount a breach, or to march up to the mouth of a cannon, elſewhere.

But if we throw the principle of honour, the influence of fame, and the rewards of bravery out of the queſtion, I am perſuaded there are thouſands who would ſooner encounter an armed enemy, and face all the dangers and horrors of war, than attack the very ſheep of *Hirta*, in thoſe hideous faſtneſſes into which they very often make their retreat.

The

The old rams if chaſed into dangerous places, and heated into a paſſion, turn ſometimes deſperately fierce; reduced to the neceſſity of yielding or tumbling over a precipice into the ſea, they face about, and attack the purſuers.

To the weſt of *Soay* is a naked rock called *Plaſte*, and between *Soay* and the main iſland lies another, which goes under the name of *Stacki-birach*; within piſtol ſhot of this laſt mentioned, lies *Stacki-don*, or the ſtack of no conſequence, being the only rock, within the territories of *Hirta*, where the fowls do not hatch. *Plaſte* and *Stacki-birach*, derive their names from their reſpective forms; the firſt being flatter near its top, and the latter ending in a ſpire.

To the weſt of *Boreray* are two rocks more, *Stack-in-Armin*, and *Lij*, each of them remarkable for its height, and the prodigious number of wild fowl that haunt

haunt them. *Stack*, in the *Galic* ſignifies a pyramidical rock, which riſes out of the ſea, and is detached from every thing elſe. There is not, I apprehend, a ſingle word in the *Engliſh* tongue that expreſſes this complex idea. In the ſame *Galic*, *armin* ſtands for a hero, or great man, and as this language is a dialect, or branch of the old *Celtic*, ónce ſpoken all the way from *Spain* to the *Baltic* and further. I am tempted to believe, that *Arminius* was no more than the ordinary title, given, by way of eminence, to that illuſtrious hero and truly great man, who deſtroyed *Varus* and his legions, fought againſt *Germanicus*, and the beſt troops of the *Roman* Empire, and was, to ſpeak with *Tacitus**, the deliverer of *Germany*. But whatever may be in this conjecture, tradition has not preſerved the name or adventures of the great man or hero, after whom *Stack-in-Armin* was called.

* Annal. Lib. II. cap. ultima.

Having

Having thus taken a ſurvey of all the land and rocks, of *St. Kilda*, I ſhall now proceed to ſpeak of their land animals.

All the cows in the principal iſle, and it is there only the men of *Hirta* raiſe cattle of that kind, hardly exceed forty including the young ones. This ſcarcity of black cattle is uncommon in a place of ſuch extent, and ſo productive of graſs. Of theſe forty cows ſome are the ſteward's property, and by virtue of an immemorial cuſtom, all the milk yielded by thoſe which belong to the people fall to his ſhare. This cruel law which has been in ſome meaſure aboliſhed by the preſent ſteward, muſt, be one reaſon why the ſtock of cattle is ſo inconſiderable at *Hirta*.

Another reaſon may be drawn from the impoſſibility of ſelling the increaſe of their ſtore to any perſon, excepting to one whoſe power is abſolute. This every one will readily ſee, muſt be the caſe, unleſs we ſup-

ſuppoſe that the hearts and underſtandings of all *St. Kilda*'s ſtewards, are better diſpoſed than thoſe of other governors, baſhaws, viceroys and monarchs.

While deſpotiſm reigns over that little community, induſtry will be effectually diſcouraged, and poverty muſt be the natural conſequence of both, which by the by is no evil, as the neceſſaries of life are eaſily purchaſed by the *St. Kildians*, and any thing elſe is hardly of any uſe to them.

The preſent ſteward is far from being unmercifully inclined, and has already reformed ſome old abuſes.

It is true, liberty has ſcarce been taſted before his time, and its real value little underſtood within the ſmall province he governs. But the people though unacquainted with the peculiar felicity of the

Bri-

Britiſh conſtitution, and never unaccuſtomed to the yoke of ſlavery, are not of the ſame low ſpirit with thoſe ſervile *Cappadocians*, who refuſed the invaluable preſent of freedom, offered to them by the *Romans*. The hard preſſure of grievances they feel like other men, are ready enough to murmur in corners, and have formerly made ſome efforts to recover the natural right of the human ſpecies.

If one divide the *St. Kildians* into three claſſes, thoſe who belong to the higheſt, poſſeſs ſeven or eight cows, the people of middle rank from four to one, and thoſe of the loweſt order none at all. Every beaſt of that kind in the iſle is houſed in the winter ſeaſon, and as the place affords much more provender than theſe are able to conſume, it is plain there would be no difficulty in rearing up many more, were the natives led by their inclination, or directed by intereſt ſo to do.

The

The few cows they have are very pretty, though quite ſmall; they are generally red or ſpeckled, and would be thought curioſities, I fancy, in ſome other parts of *Britain*. But there may be ſome reaſon to ſuſpect that they cannot thrive there, as they ſeem to be of much the ſame conſtitution with thoſe of the ſame kind, in ſome other ſmall iſles on the north-weſt coaſt. The cattle brought up in theſe, if driven to the neighbouring places, where the graſs happens to be of a very different nature, are apt to contract a kind of ſtrangury, which is in a ſhort time ſucceeded by copious effuſions of urine, deeply tinged with blood, a ſymptom which infallibly prognoſticates the approaching death of every beaſt ſo affected. The graſs of the iſles, which produce the cattle obnoxious to this diſtemper is very ſaltiſh, remarkably fine, and without any mixture of heath. It is true, there is no difficulty in finding graſs with the ſame qualities, in the more ſouthern parts of

our

our country; but how to drive the cattle of the ſmall iſles, now in my eye, thither without ſubjecting them to the inconveniences or danger mentioned above, is the queſtion.

All the horſes of *St. Kilda* are only ten, including foals and colts, they are of a very diminutive ſize, but extremely well caſt, full of fire and very hardy. The ſmall beaſts of that kind, here and in ſome other iſles carry loads, greatly beyond the conception of ſtrangers, who would form a notion of their ſtrength from the ſmall ſize of their bodies. One may, I ſuppoſe, very reaſonably attribute their extraordinary mettle to the quality of the graſs on which they feed, which is abundantly ſubſtantial, though ſhort, as it riſes generally out of a ſandy ſoil near the ſea, and muſt for that reaſon, be ſtrongly impregnated with particles apt to inflame the blood and invigorate the ſpirits.

At *Hirta* it is, perhaps, unneceſſary to bring up more animals of this ſpecies, the people have no ſea-ware to carry from their ſhore, like the other iſlanders, and all the other manure, uſed by them, are carried by their wives and children without any great inconvenience, to the ſeveral plots for which it is deſtined, as all their arable ground lies contiguous to their houſes. Their turf they bring down from the tops of the hills, which hang above the village in wicker baſkets or hampers. As the iſle produces not the ſmalleſt ſprig of any kind of wood, and as of courſe they muſt purchaſe the hampers at a dear rate, the poor people are extremely tender of them, and for that reaſon cover them with ſkins, and line the bottom with rags.

The *St. Kildians* owe a great part of their felicity to ſheep and wild fowl. They have conſiderable flocks of ſheep; it is hardly poſſible to aſcertain the preciſe

number of them in the main isle. The people have their own mysteries of state. In proportion to the number of sheep he possesses, every man must pay a certain heavy tax to the steward; and very few, if any, are scrupulous enough not to practise frauds if they can. The temptation to conceal as much as they possibly can, in this way, is surely strong. According to the laws of their land, every *Hirta* householder, must pay to the person he calls his master, every second he lamb, every seventh fleece, and every seventh she lamb.

At *Borera*, are about four hundred sheep, and in the main isle are, I may venture to affirm, a thousand more; they are all of the smallest kind, and their wool is short and coarse. It is rather softer than that in the other isles, and not so well mixed. The mutton had, I imagined, a peculiar taste, though agreeable enough. Every one of those sheep has two horns, and many

of them four. They are wonderfully fruitful. One of the people assured me, that in the course of thirteen months, one sheep had encreased his flock with nine more: She had brought three lambs in the month of *March*, three more in the same month the year after, and each of the first three had a young one before they had been thirteen months old.

CHAP. VIII.

Of the Sea and Land Fowls at Hirta.

VIRGIL in the ſixth book of the *Æneid*, compares an infinite multitude of melancholly ghoſts, that fluttered about the banks of *Acheron*, and firſt to the number of leaves ſhaken down to the ground, by the firſt autumnal ſtorm that ſtrips a wood of its foliage, and afterwards to a vaſt flight of birds driven from the ocean by a cold ſeaſon, into warmer countries *. *Milton* made no ſcruple to bor-

* Thick as the leaves come fluttering from above
When cooler Autumn ſtrips the blaſted grove:
Thick as the feather'd flocks in cloſe array,
O'er the wide fields of ocean wing their way;
When from the rage of winter they repair
To warmer ſuns and more indulgent air.
All ſtretch their ſuppliant hands, and all implore
The firſt kind paſſage to the further ſhore.

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row the firſt part of this ſimile, and for ſome reaſon, beſt known to himſelf, rejected the laſt, in that noble deſcription of the fallen angels, lying on the burning lake, thunder-ſtruck and half dead with aſtoniſhment, he employs the image of *Virgil*'s autumnal leaves very happily, but keeps out the other drawn from the feathered tribes *. It will be thought, perhaps, that *Virgil* rather ſinks than riſes in the laſt part of his ſimile, as there ſeems to be no room for a compariſon between the number of leaves on the one hand, and that of birds on the other, and that *Milton*'s compariſon is more in the manner of a real landſcape. But I am perſuaded that the rocks of *St. Kilda* would convince any man that *Virgil*'s fancy, in the inſtance now

* *Satan* call'd
His Legions, Angel forms, who lay entranc'd
Thick as Autumnal leaves that ſtrow the brooks,
In *Vallambroſa*, where the *Etrurian* ſhades
High over-arch'd, imbow'r, or ſcatter'd ſedge
Aflote, when with fierce winds *Orion* arm'd,
Hath vex'd the red ſea coaſt.

before

before us, was correct. Without employing a poetical figure, or the ſmalleſt exaggeration, it is literally true, that the rocks of *Boreray*, *Stack-in-Armin* and *Lij*, are in ſummer time totally covered with Solan-Geeſe and other fowls, and appear at a diſtance like ſo many mountains covered with ſnow. The neſts of the Solan-Geeſe, not to mention thoſe of other fowls, are ſo cloſe that when one walks between them, the hatching fowls on either ſide can always take hold of one's cloaths, and they will often ſit ſtill untill they are attacked, rather than expoſe their eggs to the danger of being deſtroyed by ſea-gulls; at the ſame time an equal number fly about, and furniſh food for their mates that are employed in hatching, and there are beſides large flocks of barren fowls of the different tribes, that frequent the rocks of *St. Kilda*.

The Solan-Gooſe, according to ſome, derives its name from the *Galic* word *Sociler*,

ciler, which denotes the ſharpneſs of his ſight. He obſerves his prey from a conſiderable height, and darts down upon it with incredible force. He equals almoſt a tame gooſe in ſize, his bill is long, ſharp, and a little crooked at the point, his colour, except a little black on the extremities of the wings, is white when a year old, but before that age a dark brown. The *St. Kildians* kill a Solan-Gooſe with great alertneſs, by diſlocating a certain joint of the neck very near the head; the reſt of the neck is made for ſtrength, and adapted to the body in ſuch a manner, that without this art it would be difficult and tedious to kill them *.

* The common amuſement of the herring-fiſhers, ſhews the great ſtrength of this fowl: The fiſhers fix a herring upon a board which has a ſmall weight under it, to ſink it a little below the ſurface of the ſea: The Solan-Gooſe obſerving the fiſh, darts down upon it perpendicularly, and with ſo much force that he runs his bill irrecoverably through the board, and is taken up directly by the fiſhers.

The Solan-Geese repair to *Hirta* in the month of *March*, and continue there till after the beginning of *November*. Before the middle of that month, they and all the other sea fowls that are so fond of this coast, retire much about the same time into some other favourite regions, so that not a single fowl belonging to their element is to be seen about *St. Kilda*, from the beginning of winter down to the middle of *February*.

Whether one can rationally account for this migration, by resolving the matter into the severity of the *Hirta* climate, or the tempestuousness of the sea around it, or into the migrations made by the fishes, with which these fowls support themselves, or into all these causes taken together, I shall not venture to determine. One thing is certain, that the Solan-Geese and some other tribes of these voracious birds, that sojourn here for more than the half of the year, feed principally upon

herrings, and it is equally ſo, that though immenſe ſhoals of that fiſh are annually upon the coaſt of ſome other weſtern iſles, not a ſingle Solan-Gooſe is to be ſeen there after *Michaelmas*.

" The herrings," ſaith *Cambden*, " which " in the time of our grand-fathers, ſwarm- " ed only about *Norway*, do now in our " times, by the bounty of Divine Provi- " dence, ſwim in great ſhoals round our " coaſt every year. About *Midſummer* " they draw from the main ſea towards " the coaſt of *Scotland*, from thence they " arrive on our coaſts; and from the " middle of *Auguſt* to *November*, there is " excellent and moſt plentiful fiſhing for " them, all along from *Scarborough* to the " *Thames* mouth. Afterwards by ſtormy " weather they are carried into the *Britiſh* " ſea, and are there caught till *Chriſtmas*; " thence having ranged the coaſt of *Ire-* " *land*, on both ſides, and gone round " *Britain*, they return into the northern " ocean,

"ocean, where they remain till *June*, and "after they have caſt their ſpawn, return "again in great ſhoals."

Cambden, undoubtedly knew the hiſtory and antiquities of his own country, better than any one of his cotemporaries: But I am apt to believe, that herrings were known and caught in *Scotland*, before the æra ſettled by him. *Abercromby* in his life of King *James* the Third, quotes a law made in that monarch's reign, and about the year 1370. A law by which "certain "Lords and Burgeſſes, were ordered to "make great ſhips, buſſes, and pink-"boats, with *nets* and all other neceſſaries "for fiſhing." I confeſs, that author has not told us in plain language, whether theſe nets and other implements, were intended for the herring-fiſhing. But any one will be ready to conclude ſo, from the preamble with which he has uſhered in the act. Be that how it will, it is certain beyond any poſſibility of doubt, that vaſt

ſhoals

ſhoals of this excellent ſort of fiſh, are found upon the coaſt of *Scotland* now before *Midſummer*; and it is equally true, that they caſt their ſpawn in our bays from year to year. The immenſe quantities of herring-fry, caught every autumnal ſeaſon in the weſtern iſles, and elſewhere, affords a clear demonſtration of this; and it is probable, that ſome great ſhoals of the larger kind, hover about that coaſt all the year over.

It has been already obſerved, that the Solan-Geeſe make a longer ſtay in *Hirta*, than in any other part of the *Deucaledonian* ſea; but they retire from there, before the herrings have quitted the adjacent coaſts. Into what quarter of the world this tribe of wild fowl, and their *St. Kilda* companions repair, after the winter is ſet in, whether into the northern ocean, the native country and winter quarters of herrings in general, or into ſome other re-

gion

gion near the ſun, or whether they be of the ſleeping kind, they who pry into the myſteries of natural hiſtory, or have converſed much with writers of voyages, can beſt explain. I ſhall only pretend to ſay, that theſe different nations of the feathered kind, are taught to chuſe the propereſt habitations and feeding places, and to ſhift their quarters ſeaſonably, by an unerring inſtinct of nature, or to ſpeak with the poet, they are directed by that God

Who bids the ſtork, Columbus-like, explore
Heavens not his own, and worlds unknown before,
Who calls the council, ſtates the certain day,
Who forms the phalanx, and who points the way.

The neſt of the Solan-Gooſe is a large collection made up of very different materials; he carries any thing that is fit for his purpoſe, whether at land or floating on the waters, to the place where he builds, graſs, ſea-ware, ſhavings of timber, pieces of cloth, and very often other implements

which

which he muſt have got in ſome foreign land; yet ſuch is the difficulty in furniſhing a ſufficient quantity of theſe different materials for building, that they often encroach on their neighbours property, and the manner in which they do it, ſhews that *want* has given them notions of *property*, that are not known among fowls where *plenty* renders them unneceſſary: If a Solan-Gooſe finds his neighbours neſt at any time without the fowl, he takes advantage of his abſence, ſteals as much of the materials of it as he can conveniently carry, and ſenſible of the injuſtice he hath done, takes his flight directly towards the ocean; if the lawful owner does not diſcover the injury he has ſuffered, before the thief is out of ſight, he eſcapes with impunity, and returns ſoon with his burden, as if he had made a foreign purchaſe.

It has been ſaid, that one of the corps acts the part of a centinel, while the other

Solan-

Solan-Geeſe are aſleep, gives the alarm if an enemy ſhould approach, and that a general maſſacre may be eaſily made, if this centinel be ſurpriſed and diſpatched. The preſent *St. Kildians*, deny that the ſafety of the whole flock depends ſo much upon the vigilance of *one* of their number; but they told me, that they always underſtand, from the different accents of theſe creatures, or from the different modulations of their voices, whether they are actuated by hope or fear. At night while the creeping fowlers hear them cry *Grog*, *Grog*, they continue to approach without any fears of alarming them, but as ſoon as they hear *Bir*, *Bir*, they halt; if the fowls who were alarmed of the approaching danger, are not able to diſcover the enemy, they give the ſignal of ſecurity *Grog*, *Grog*, the fowlers then advance, and lay with great caution the firſt Solan-Gooſe which they kill, among his old companions; and the *St. Kildians* have given me repeated aſſurances, that the living begin to

mourn

mourn immediately over their departed friend, with a lamentable tone of voice, examining his body very narrowly with their bills, and are ſo deeply affected, that the fowlers improve their ſorrow and confuſion, much to their own advantage.

The *St. Kilda* community have no more than a ſingle boat, which muſt lie idle all winter, and is filled up with ſtones and earth in a ſecure place, to prevent the greateſt of all public calamities, that of its being ſwept away into the ſea, or daſhed againſt a rock by a violent guſt of wind. About the middle of *March*, a ſelect band of adventurers put to ſea in this boat, and go to the neighbouring iſles, upon an expedition to them of very great importance. This is the ſeaſon for catching the old Solan-Geeſe before they begin to lay; they hunt them in the night time, through ſteep, and (to all other men inacceſſible) precipices; as many as are not intended for immediate conſumption, are ſecured within

within the little houſes or barns, more than once mentioned, without ſalt, or uſing any other art to preſerve them, than opening their backs, and waſhing them clean. They go upon another expedition to theſe iſles about the middle of *May*. This is the ſeaſon for gathering the eggs of the Solan-Geeſe, all of that kind that fall in the way at *Boreray*, and *Stack-in-Armin*, excepting thoſe that are ſoon to be conſumed, they keep in their little ſtone houſes. Great numbers of theſe eggs lie there, till the month of *July*, without any care taken to preſerve them, an art which this indelicate people would moſt heartily deſpiſe, ſhould one be at the pains to inſtruct them in it. By that time theſe eggs muſt unavoidably be offenſive, and intolerably ſo, to the ſenſes of any other race of men. But to the men and women of *Hirta*, ſuch is the power of early prejudices, and inveterate habits, they afford a moſt agreeable repaſt. It is ſurprizing enough, that the taſte of this people

ple ſhould be ſo ſtrangely debauched in their appetites: But more ſo, that their health is not in the leaſt affected, as far as I could learn, by this ſeemingly pernicious ſort of aliment.

While the rocks of *Boreray* and *Stack-in-Armin* are thus plundered, all the eggs laid in the rock called *Lij*, are held inviolably ſacred. This is an anciently eſtabliſhed cuſtom; and ſhould any one break it, it is the univerſal opinion, that the whole conſtitution is entirely ſubverted. The young Solan-Gooſe is fit for uſe in the month of *September*, if the firſt egg laid by the old one remains untouched. If otherwiſe, the young fowl is not fit for the table till the month of *October*. Then, and not till then, the community have, beſides the rock of *Lij*, other reſources in this way, I mean thoſe of *Boreray* and *Stack-in-Armin*.

Before the young Solan-Geeſe, which they call *Goug*, fly off, they are larger than the

the mothers, and exceſſively fat. The fat on their breaſts is ſometimes three inches deep: The inhabitants of *Hirta*, have a method of preſerving their greeſe in a kind of bag, made of the ſtomach of the old Solan-Gooſe caught in *March*. In their language it is called *Gibain*; and this oily kind of thick ſubſtance, manufactured in their way, they uſe by way of ſauce, or inſtead of butter, among their porridge and flummery. In the adjacent iſlands they adminiſter this oily ſubſtance to their cattle, if ſeized with violent colds, or obſtinate coughs; and it is the general belief, that the application of the *Gibain*, in ſuch caſes has a very good effect.

Another ſea fowl highly eſteemed in this iſland, is the Tulmer. I was not a little entertained, with the encomiums they beſtowed on this bird. "Can the world," ſaid one of the moſt ſenſible men at *Hirta* to me, "exhibit a more valuable commo-

" dity? The Tulmer furniſhes oil for the
" lamp, down for the bed, the moſt ſalu-
" brious food, and the moſt efficacious
" ointments for healing wounds, beſides a
" thouſand other virtues of which he is
" poſſeſſed, which I have not time to
" enumerate. But, to ſay all in one word,
" deprive us of the Tulmer, and *St. Kilda*
" is no more."

This bird is in ſize much the ſame with an ordinary barn hen, but his legs and wings are much longer. Over the back, wings and tail, he is of a light grey colour: round the breaſt and neck, more whitiſh; his head is round, his neck ſhort and thick; his bill is made for ſtrength, bending inwards, pointed like that of an eagle, and in length about an inch and an half. He is a moſt ravenous fowl, and feeds only on ſorrel and the fat of fiſh. Pieces of whale, and ſeal blubber, are often found in his neſt.

This

This fowl lays no more than one egg in a ſeaſon, being peculiarly ſterile among all the different tribes of birds that haunt this iſle. It is obſerved, that he takes revenge for robbing his neſt of this egg. So exquiſitely nice are his feelings, and ſo ſtrong his reſentment, that he conceives an unconquerable averſion for his neſt if one breathes over it, and will never pay it any more viſits: For this reaſon, to plunder his neſt, or to offer indignity to it, is in *Hirta* a high crime and miſdemeanour.

Every one who is poſſeſſed of a bit of land there, has a proportionable ſhare of the rocks in which the fowls hatch. The diviſions are made with a ſingular exactneſs. The ſmalleſt encroachment on a *St. Kildian*'s property, in theſe rocks, is by an ancient cuſtom ſeverely puniſhed.

The young ones of this ſpecies, are in ſeaſon about the beginning of *Auguſt*. This is the term at which the tenant takes

poſſeſſion of his farm, and this fowl may be properly enough called the firſt fruits of it. How ſoon the young Tulmer is attacked in the neſt, he endeavours to diſconcert the enemy, by ſpouting out a quantity of oil at his wide noſtrils, which he ſquirts away directly into the face and eyes of the fowler; and this inſtinctive ſtratagem gives him frequently an opportunity to make his eſcape. But thoſe who are verſed in this diverſion, take all poſſible precautions to ſurprize him; the more ſo, that they think the oil, furniſhed by this fowl, incomparably precious, and for that reaſon will exert the whole power of their ſkill and dexterity to ſave it. Yet in ſpite of all their care, the fowlers are totally beſmeared with it, and any part of their cloaths, that is touched by an oil ſo ſpirituous, will burn like a candle. Every Tulmer yields near an *Engliſh* pint of this liquid ſubſtance, which drops out at the noſtrils of the fowl while warm, and a conſiderable quan-

quantity of it is annually preſerved in the iſle. Of the fowls themſelves, every family has a great number ſalted in caſks for winter proviſions, and the amount of the whole is about twelve barrels.

The third ſpecies of the *Hirta* birds, that deſerve a particular deſcription, is there called Lavie, and ought perhaps to ſtand foremoſt on the liſt, as they are the earlieſt viſitants in *February*, and bring to the iſland the auſpicious preſages of their approaching felicity.

No ſooner do theſe thrice welcome harbingers of plenty and univerſal happineſs appear on the coaſt, than the moſt conſiderable perſons in this ſmall ſtate aſſemble together, to congratulate one another on this great occaſion, and withal to ſettle the operations of their campaign. With this view they divide their people into parties, made up of their ableſt fowlers: They who ſuſtain that high

character, are thoſe experienced men who manage the ropes, to be hereafter deſcribed, clamber through the moſt tremendous rocks, and ſtalk there, with the greateſt addreſs and intrepidity. On the firſt acquiſition of this prey, the people feaſt very lovingly together, the heart of every one overflowing with joy.

The Lavie in ſize reſembles a duck, though rather longer, and hardly ſo thick: He is black above, the whole breaſt and belly white, with a circle of the ſame colour round the neck; the bill is black and ſharp at the point; the egg is longer than that of the bird I have compared it to, and moſt beautifully variegated with a great diverſity of colours, black, white and red, blue, green and yellow; and what to me was ſurprizing, ſcarce any two of them very like one another.

This fowl builds nothing in the way of neſt, but lays her egg on the ſhelf of a bare rock,

rock, where ſhe plants it in ſo very nice a manner, that if once touched, one will find it impoſſible to fix it in the ſame place again. So ſlender is the hold theſe eggs have of the rock, that they tumble down into the ſea in thick ſhowers, if the fowls are ſurprized, ſo as to ſtart away in a hurry.

As ſoon as the Lavie is diſcovered on the coaſt, the heroes who have formerly diſtinguiſhed themſelves by ſuch feats, go down, with the help of their ropes, into the well known ſhelves of thoſe rocks, each having a broad piece of linnen, or any thing remarkably white, fixed on his breaſt. This operation is done in the night time: The bird miſtaking an object ſo conſpicuous for a part of the rock, endeavours to cling to it, and is immediately caught and diſpatched. In this poſture the fowler continues till about the dawn: Then, and not till then, whatever his ſucceſs may be, he makes the wonted ſignal, that is, he pulls

the rope at which his life hangs: His companion who ſtands above, takes care in the firſt place to ſecure the prey, which ſometimes conſiſts of no leſs than four hundred Lavies; and once that is done, helps or hauls up the adventurer, who is not without reaſon highly extolled for his proweſs, and moſt graciouſly received by all his friends.

As the *St. Kildians* have for many ages uſed this art, it has become to them a very ſimple one. But to a ſtranger who makes any reflections, it muſt be not a little ſurprizing, that any one of the more antient natives, ſhould have had ingenuity enough to deviſe the ſtratagem of the white cloath, or plant himſelf in a ſhelf in the night time, with any reaſonable expectation of intercepting a creature made for flying.

What the true *Engliſh* name of the Lavie may be, I know not with any degree of certainty. There are two ſorts of migrating

ting ſea birds, which breed in *Ramſey* iſland, on the coaſt of *Pembroke-ſhire*, one of which goes under the name of *Eligug* or *Shout*, and the other under that of *Rarorbil*. From the account given by Mr. *Lhoyd* of theſe two ſpecies, in his ſupplement to *Cambden's Britannia*, under the article, *Dimetæ*, an account rather too indiſtinct, I conclude that the *St. Kilda* Lavie, is either the *Eligug* or *Rarorbil* of the *Engliſh* and *Welſh*.

The Bougir of *Hirta*, is by ſome called the Coulterneb, and by others the Puffin: This is a very fine ſprightly bird, in ſize much like a pigeon: It ſeems to be conſcious of its own beauty, cocking its head very ſmartly, and aſſuming great airs of majeſty: Its colour is black on the outer parts, and about the breaſt, red and white: The legs are red, and the beak faſhioned like a coulter, edged above, and moſt charmingly painted with red and yellow below.

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Incredible flights of theſe Puffins flutter, during the whole ſummer ſeaſon, round about *St. Kilda* and the two iſles pertaining to it: ſometimes they cover whole plots of ground, and ſometimes while on wing, involve every thing below them in darkneſs, like a ſmall cloud of locuſts in another country.

There are two different ſpecies of them, the one larger and the other ſmaller, with ſome other marks of diverſity, ſcarce worthy of being pointed out; their feathers are the ſofteſt produced here; their eggs are white, and of much the ſame bigneſs with thoſe of a hen.

The people of this iſle live moſtly all the ſummer, on the two kinds of this fowl, together with eggs of various ſorts; and I ſhall make no difficulty of affirming, that the place could eaſily afford enough of theſe different articles, to ſupport two

thouſand perſons more during that ſeaſon.

Here I muſt remark, that every place has advantages peculiar to itſelf. If other countries are furniſhed with a variety of the luxuries, *St. Kilda* poſſeſſes in a remarkable degree the neceſſaries of life.

The inhabitants of this the obſcureſt iſland in the world, have ſtrong proofs of the equal diſpenſations of Providence. The Lavie viſits them moſt ſeaſonably in the month of *February*, when their freſh mutton and bread are perhaps nearly exhauſted, and continues to furniſh plentiful repaſts till the Solan Geeſe appear in *March*. Theſe ſupply their wants till they begin to lay. Then are theſe ſucceeded by the Puffins and a variety of eggs. When their appetites are cloyed by a frequent uſe of this food, the ſalubrious Tulmer, and their favourite young Solan-Gooſe, crown their humble boards with gran-

grander entertainments, and hold out all autumn over: In winter they have generally a greater ſtock of bread, mutton and ſalted fowl, than they are able to conſume: I ſhall ſpeak elſewhere of the fiſh very liberally furniſhed by their ſeas. Upon the whole, in ſpite of hard uſage, and peculiar diſadvantages, they feed more luxuriouſly, if that be a part of human felicity, than perhaps any ſmall or great nation of *Slaves*, upon the face of the whole earth.

I had not an opportunity of knowing a very curious fowl, ſometimes ſeen upon this coaſt, and an abſolute ſtranger, I am apt to believe, in every other part of *Scotland*. The men of *Hirta* call it the Gare-fowl, corruptly perhaps inſtead of Rare-fowl, a name probably given it by ſome one of thoſe foreigners, whom either choice or neceſſity drew into this ſecure region. This bird is above four feet in length, from the bill to the extremities of its feet;

its

its wings are in proportion to its ſize very ſhort, ſo that they can hardly poiſe or ſupport the weight of its very large body. His legs, neck, and bill are extremely long; it lays the egg, which according to the account given me, exceeds that of a gooſe, no leſs than the latter exceeds the egg of a hen, cloſe by the ſea mark, being incapable on account of its bulk, to ſoar up to the cliffs. It makes its appearance in the month of *July*. The *St. Kildians* do not receive an annual viſit from this ſtrange bird, as from all the reſt in the liſt, and from many more. It keeps at a diſtance from them, they know not where, for a courſe of years. From what land or ocean it makes its uncertain voyages to their iſle, is perhaps a myſtery in nature. A gentleman who had been in the *Weſt-Indies*, informed me, that according to the deſcription given of him, he muſt be the Penguin of that clime, a fowl that points out the proper ſoundings to ſeafaring people.

At *Hirta* is too frequently ſeen, and very ſeverely felt, a large ſea-gull, which is deteſted by every *St. Kildian.* This miſchievous bird deſtroys every egg that falls in its way, very often the young fowls, and ſometimes the weakeſt of the old. It is hardly poſſible to expreſs the hatred with which this otherwiſe good natured people, purſue theſe gulls. If one happen to mention them, it throws their whole blood into a ferment: ſerpents are not at all ſuch deteſtable objects any where elſe.

They exert their whole ſtrength of induſtry and ſkill to get hold of this cruel enemy, a taſk very far from being eaſy, as they are no leſs vigilant than wicked: If caught, they outvie one another in torturing this imp of hell to death; ſuch is the emphatical language in which they expreſs an action ſo grateful to their vindictive ſpirit: They pluck out

his eyes, ſew his wings together, and ſend him a drift: To eat any of its eggs, tho' among the largeſt and beſt their iſle affords, would be accounted a moſt flagitious action, and worthy of a monſter only: They extract the meat out of the ſhell and leave that quite empty in the neſt: The gull ſits upon it till ſhe pines away.

This fowl is perfectly white in the breaſt and downwards, blueiſh along the back, and black in the wings: It is of the ſea-maw kind, and equal in ſize to a Solan-Gooſe, or nearly ſo: They call it Tuliac in *St. Kilda*; but in the other weſtern iſles it goes under a different name.

It will, I apprehend, be thought unneceſſary, by this time, to give a minute detail of all the other more ignoble or uſeleſs tribes of ſea and land fowl, that frequent the

the *St. Kilda* rocks and iſles. There is a great variety of them: One ſpecies, numerous enough, is called the Sgrobir, and and another the Aſhilag: Sea-magpyes are here, and what is much ſtranger, magpyes have been in the iſle, more than once, though very ſeldom in any other part of the weſtern Æbuda: There are herons, curlews, pigeons, plovers, beſides the ſmall claſſes of ſparrows, larks, ſtarlins and wrens. How theſe little birds, I mean the wrens particularly, could have flown thither, or whether they went accidentally in boats, I leave undetermined. Should it be aſſerted here, that *St. Kildians* have by the dint of ſtalking caught herons, that is the moſt watchful fowls in the world, I am afraid the ſtory would hardly be credited, though the fact ſeems to be very well atteſted.

At *Hirta* are ſome ravens of the largeſt ſort, and a few eagles, which though very per-

pernicious elſewhere, are perfectly harmleſs here, the reaſon I conceive muſt be, that their neceſſities are more than ſufficiently ſupplied by the inexhauſtable ſtores of eggs, that muſt every other moment fall in their way. This muſt be the caſe in ſummer. How they procure their food in winter is a queſtion which one will find ſome greater difficulty in reſolving, unleſs we take it for granted that they make frequent excurſions into the neighbouring iſles.

CHAP. IX.

Of Augurs and Auſpices.

SOME different tribes of the *Hirta* birds, particularly the Tulmer, the large Sea-Gull and ſmaller Maws, quit their native element upon certain occaſions, and retire to the land. Here they flutter about the fields, or hover above the houſes; and as if highly diſſatisfied with their condition, ſhift every moment from place to place, now riſing up and immediately lighting upon the ground, or threatning to do ſo. This phenomenon is by the *St. Kildians*, and all the other iſlanders reckoned an infallible prognoſtic of an approaching tempeſt. That the ſame opinion prevailed among the antients, with regard to ſome of theſe fowls, is plain from thoſe lines of *Virgil* in the firſt book

of

of the Georgics, which I ſhall give the reader in *Warton*'s tranſlation,

From the frail bark that ploughs the raging main,
The greedy waves unwillingly refrain;
When loud the cormorant ſcreams and ſeeks the land,
And coots and ſea-gulls ſport upon the ſand.

Here the learned gentleman diſtinguiſhes the Coot from the Sea-gull (though his author confines his obſervation to the Tulica only) not without reaſon in my opinion, as that general word comprehends under it more than one ſpecies of the ſame kind. Another remark I ſhall take the liberty to make is, that the vocable *mergi* belongs very properly to a great variety of diving birds, and may be applied to the *Hirta* Tulmer, without any violence as well as to any one elſe. I add further that the firſt of theſe words, Tulica is the very name commonly given in the *Galic* tongue to the Sea-Maw, if we only leave out the *Roman* termination: Nor need one be ſurprized at this, or at any other ſimilarity of the ſame kind. To reſolve the thing

into an accidental agreement of ſounds is far from being reaſonable. Some *Celtic* nations had more than once over-run *Italy*: They poſſeſſed a conſiderable part of it for a very long time, I mean the *Ciſalpine Gaul*, and muſt of courſe have left many vocables of their language behind them. It is certain that the *Romans* never made a conqueſt of thoſe countries in which the *Galic* prevails, and therefore we may with reaſon conclude, that *Italy* muſt have borrowed the vocable now in queſtion from the *Celtic*, of which the *Galic* is undoubtedly a dialect.

But to return to the ſubject of prognoſtications. The iſlanders in general poſſeſs the art of predicting the changes of the weather, perhaps in much greater perfection than many of thoſe who are beyond doubt ſuperior to them in ſome other branches of knowledge. Every one muſt be ſenſible that this ſcience, is in many inſtances highly beneficial to a

in

people whoſe buſineſs leads them to agriculture and the ſea, however fallacious it may be on ſome occaſions. Of that matter men of ſenſe may judge as they pleaſe; but ſo it is that the *St. Kildians* and their neighbours owe much of their knowledge in this way, whether real or imaginary, to the obſervations they and their predeceſſors have made on the ſcreamings, flight, and other motions of birds, and more eſpecially on their migrations from one place to another.

The truly philoſophical manner in which the great *Latin* poet has accounted for the joyful croakings of the raven ſpecies, upon a favourable change of weather, will in my apprehenſion, point out at the ſame time the true natural cauſes of that ſpirit of divination, with regard to ſtorms of wind, rain, or ſnow, by which the ſea-gull, tulmer, cormorant, heron, crow, plover, and other birds are actuated ſome-

time before the change comes on*. It is no unpardonable preſumption in me, to think that all the commentators and tranſlators, that fell in my way, have ſpoiled the beauty of that paſſage, and miſtaken its grammatical conſtruction. I ſhall therefore take the liberty of tranſlating it in my way: The poet is enumerating the various ſigns of approaching fair weather. The ravens afford one of theſe prognoſtics. Our author then ex-

* Tum liquidas corvi preſſo ter gutture voces
Aut quater ingeminat; et ſæpe cubilibus altis,
Neſcio qua præter ſolitum dulcedine læti
Inter ſe foliis ſtrepitant (juvat imbribus actis
Progeniem parvam dulceſque reviſere nidos)
Haud equidem, credo, quia ſit divinitus illis
Ingenium, aut rerum fata prudentia major;
Verum ubi tempeſtas et cæli mobilis humor
Mutavere vias, et Jupiter humidus auſtris
Denſat, erant quæ rara modo, et quæ denſa, relaxat
Vertuntur ſpecies animorum, et pectora motus
Nunc alios, alios, dum nubila ventus agebat
Concipiunt: Hinc ille avium concentus in agris,
Et lætæ pecudes, et ovantes gutture corvi.

GEORG. I. book v. 410, &c.

plains

plains the manner how, and the reaſon why.

" Then the ravens, compreſſing their " throats three or four times, re-double " ſhriller notes; and often in their lofty " bed-rooms ruſtle together againſt the " leaves, elated by I know not what plea- " ſure beyond their uſual mood, (to " reviſit their tender off-ſpring and dear " neſts, after thoſe ſhowers which con- " fined them too long there are ſpent " away gives them the higheſt ſatisfac- " tion) not indeed, according to my opi- " nion, becauſe they are inſpired with " preſcience by the Gods, nor becauſe Fate " has given them a more extenſive know- " ledge of things than moſt other beings " have received: Not ſo; but, after the " ſtormy wind and the changeful water of " the ſky, ſhall have altered their courſes, " and after the God of Rain condenſes, " with the help of the dark ſoutherly

" winds, thoſe things which were juſt be-
" fore rare, and rarifies what was denſe,
" the ideas formed by thoſe Beings, which
" have a principle of ſenſe and cogi-
" tation, take a new turn, and their
" ſouls receive different impreſſions, very
" different from thoſe they had within
" them when the wind was driving the
" clouds about: Hence it is that the birds
" join in concert through the fields: Hence
" it is that the cattle rejoice, and hence is
" the ovation of the ravens throat."

The poet has taken the liberty here, like an honeſt Free-thinker, to examine with candor and to cenſure with great modeſty the eſtabliſhed belief of ages. He had too much ſenſe, and too little ſuperſtition, to account for the preſages of birds, with regard to the variations of the weather, agreeably to the doctrine taught by the Augurs of his own and other countries. He did not believe like the followers of *Plato*, that ravens were enabled by *Apollo*

or

or any other God, to predict future events; nor could he think like the *Stoics*, that fate did give, or could have given, a greater ſhare of natural knowledge to them, than had been allowed to other Beings. He rejects the ſyſtems of theſe two ſects, as far as this point was concerned, and follows that of *Epicurus*. In ſhort, he reſolves the prognoſtications of ravens, not into an extraordinary interpoſition of Heaven, nor into the capricious humour of a blind fatality, but into plain phyſical cauſes, the influence of the atmoſphere. The different preſſures of this atmoſphere, or in other words, the different directions given by nature to the clouds, winds, and waters above, will make different impreſſions on the ſpirits of animals or birds, ſo as to give them a new turn. A change or contrariety of impreſſions, will unavoidably produce a contrariety of motions, will produce new images, new paſſions, new affections, in a word, a new diſpoſition of mind. From theſe various and in-

com-

compatible images, paſſions and affections, we are to account for thoſe hours of dulneſs and good humour, for thoſe exulting ſongs, melancholly ditties, obſtinate ſilence, frequent migrations, and other inconſiſtencies by which Birds expreſs their internal feelings at different times.

Every diſcerning perſon that lives in the country, eſpecially if near the Sea, muſt have obſerved, that ſeveral claſſes of the feathered kind are taught by the conſtitution of their ſouls and bodies, to foreſee the changes of the weather; and obſervations of the ſame kind muſt have been made by mankind in ancient times. But whether the art of divining, by Birds in another way, began in *Chaldæa*, *Phrygia* or *Greece*, whether it was invented by *Prometheus* or *Melampus*, by *Tireſias*, or any one elſe that has been reputed the father of it, it is impoſſible to determine and idle to enquire.

I know ſome men have derived the origin of this ſcience, and of navigation together with it, from *Noah*'s raven, pigeon and ark. But without going ſo far back, we may eaſily find out the true beginning of Auguries and Auſpices, in the plain ſubject now before us. Some men of uncommon ſagacity, it is impoſſible to ſay, who, or where, ſaw reaſon to conclude from many ſenſible obſervations, that certain birds by their motions and accents, prognoſticated winds and rain, while others foretold, in another manner, ſunney days and ſerene weather. They ſeeing their own obſervations confirmed very frequently by correſponding events, and miſled by that ſuperſtition which is inherent in human nature, thought that all ſuch birds muſt have been divinely inſpired: But as the predictions, which came from them, were partly favourable to mankind, and partly otherwiſe, they found it reaſonable to divide theſe ominous birds into two claſſes, the *lucky* and *unlucky*. On the unmeaning

actions

actions or idleneſs of ſuch ſilly birds; on their ſilence, ſinging, chirping, chattering and croaking, on their feeding or abſtinence, on their flying to the right hand or left, was founded an art: Which from a low and ſimple beginning grew to an immenſe height, and gained a ſurprizing degree of credit in a deluded world.

I am not able to recollect any paſſage in our ſacred volumes, from which it can be naturally enough inferred, that the *Egyptians* or *Phœnicians*, the *Iſraelites* or *Amorites*, the *Chaldæans*, or any other Eaſtern nation, however ſuperſtitiouſly inclined all theſe were, did practiſe this kind of divination. We read frequently, in the books of *Moſes* and elſewhere, of wizards, necromancers, inchanters, magicians, ſoothſayers, charmers and obſervers of times, of thoſe who conſulted familiar ſpirits and witches: Of conſulting the liver or entrails of a beaſt, that is to ſay, the *Extiſpicium* of the *Latins*; of conſulting arrows,

rods

rods or wands, the *Rabdomanteia* of the *Greeks*, we read in *Ezekiel* and *Hoſea*. But concerning augurs and auſpices we have nothing, I think, in the Old Teſtament. From this conſideration one will be ready to conclude, that the true canon of the Old Teſtament was compleated before this art was known to the oriental nations, or at leaſt to the *Jews*: If ſo, this fooliſh ſcience was probably invented by the *Scythians* of the north, or rather by the *Celtic* nations of the weſt; and by them communicated to the *Tuſcans*, the great patrons and improvers of it, or perhaps firſt to the *Greeks*. Be this how it will, it is certain that the *Gauls* and *Germans* were remarkably addicted to it; and from either of theſe, or both, it made its way into the ſeveral parts of *Britain*.

As ignorance was the mother of that devotion which the judicious part of mankind paid to augurs and their ridiculous craft; it will be naturally ſuſpected, that the

the *Highlanders* muſt have had extraordinary regard for thoſe of that profeſſion. I confeſs, this ſuſpicion is far from being ill founded. Within leſs than a century back there were ſome impoſtors in that country, ſhameleſs enough to boaſt of their ſkill in underſtanding the language of birds, like *Apollonius Tyanæus*; nor can it be denied, that there were found in that part of this kingdom men fooliſh enough to honour and reward theſe pretenders.

Of inſpired birds, ravens were accounted the moſt prophetical. Accordingly, in the language of that diſtrict, *To have the foreſight of a raven*, is to this day a proverbial expreſſion, denoting a preternatural ſagacity in predicting fortuitous events. But the ſame ſuperſtitious conceit prevailed among the more learned nations of *Greece* and *Italy*. Ravens were ſacred there to *Apollo*, the great patron of augurs, and were called the companions and attendants of that God.

In

In former times, it was the univerſal belief of the vulgar in the *Weſtern Iſles*, that ominous birds, of one kind or other, but generally of the more auſpicious ſort, hovered about every great family, ſome time before any conſiderable perſon there was to die. Theſe birds were accounted the genii of thoſe who were to leave this world, or meſſengers ſent from the other world, with timely intimations of their approaching end. How ſoon the perſon had expired, the ominous bird immediately diſappeared; or if the fowl was deſtroyed by ſome markſman, or by any other accident, the devoted man immediately expired.

Theſe harbingers of death were generally crows, ravens, kites, ſea-maws, doves or ſparrows, and ſometimes ſtrange birds ſeen only on ſuch melancholy occaſions. If theſe feathered prophets were of a whitiſh colour, here was a proof equal to a revelation ſent from above, that the departing perſon was to be infallibly tranſ-

lated into heaven: If otherwiſe, the direful omen was thought to foredoom him, without mercy, to the regions of darkneſs and endleſs ſorrow.

Fooliſh reveries of this kind are the growth of all countries. Some writers tell us, that a great number of crows fluttered about *Cicero*'s head, on the very day he was murdered by the ungrateful *Popilius Lænas*, as if to warn him of his approaching fate; and that one of them, after having made its way into his chamber, pulled away his very bed cloathes, from a ſolicitude for his ſafety; and according to the author of the *Æneid*, the ſolitary owl foretold the tragical end of the unhappy *Dido*. *Suetonius*, who took it into his head to relate all the imaginary prodigies that preceded the deaths of his twelve *Cæſars*, in a very dull narrative, never miſſes an opportunity ſo favourable of doing juſtice to the prophetical character of ſome one bird or other. It is ſurpriſing that

that *Tacitus*, a perſon of the deepeſt underſtanding, and no great friend to religion, ſhould have given into the ſame folly. But men of that complexion are upon occaſions abundantly ſuperſtitious, and profeſſed atheiſts have ſometimes been ſo.

According to a conceit that prevailed ſome time ago in the *Highlands*, the birds, which were truſted with the honourable employment of prognoſticating the death of great men, placed themſelves near their houſes, and ſometimes took the liberty to ſtand on the threſhhold, or to lie in a window. But the meſſengers of the feathered kind, which were made to ſtoop down to the low employment of ſerving thoſe of the poorer ſort in the ſame way, were obliged to keep at a reaſonable diſtance from houſes, to roam about from place to place, and to utter their predictions in the night time only. Thoſe ignoble genii moſtly haunted

the roads leading to the churchyard, and there ſcreamed loudly. If their inharmonious voices were heard in the firſt part of the night, the perſons to whom theſe goblins belonged were undoubtedly near the gates of death: If otherwiſe, they had a chance of ſurviving theſe premonitions, for ſome years: Meantime, there were ſome, who upon hearing the ſhrieks of the inauſpicious birds, knew immediately the individuals to whom they belonged.

It happened ſometimes that two of theſe unlucky monitors, meeting in a place which lay cloſe to the burying ground, fought a moſt deſperate battle: It was thought, that the fray muſt have been occaſioned by a point of honour, each of them being ambitious to have the precedency, or the ill-natured ſatisfaction of bringing his man to his grave before any other. This was the general opinion. But ſome who would be thought more ſhrewd than their neighbours,

bours, maintained ſtiffly, and with the ſame appearance of reaſon, that each of theſe birds ſtudied to ward off the impending blow, from the perſon in whom he was intereſted.

We are told by *Cicero* *, that all kings, nations and tribes made uſe of auſpices. The ſame great Author adds, that the *Piſidians*, *Cicilians*, and *Phrygians* excelled in that kind of divination. Any one who looks into *Livy* will find a clear demonſtration of that blind reſpect and paſſive obedience with which the wiſeſt nation in the univerſe honoured thoſe political impoſtors, who went under the name of augurs. *Greece* received their dictates like oracular reſponſes, with an implicit ſubmiſſion. It is true, ſome of the moſt ſenſible men had a ſupreme contempt for this ſtrange ſyſtem of ſtate tricks and popular folly: Some condemned it tacitly: Some ridiculed it openly, and

* De Divinat. lib. ii.

called the profeſſors of it cheats and impoſtors. *Fabius Maximus* among the *Romans*, though himſelf an augur, had the honeſt fortitude to ſay, much like *Hector* in the *Iliad*, that the beſt of all auguries was the intereſt of the commonwealth, and that every thing done in contradiction to that great law was done againſt the auſpices. But ſtill the bulk of every nation had the profoundeſt veneration for all the impertinencies, grimace and puerilities of this mock theology.

It is univerſally agreed, that the moſt ancient inhabitants of *Britain* muſt have derived their origin either from the *Gauls* or *Germans*. The former were incomparable proficients in the ſcience of augury, if we believe Juſtin *; and that the latter were exceſſively addicted to it, we learn from *Tacitus* †. That the poſterity of ſuch anceſtors could have eſcaped the

* Juſtin. lib. xxiv. cap. 4.
† De mor. Germ. cap. 9.

in-

infection of ſo univerſal a diſeaſe of the mind, it is impoſſible to believe; and that thoſe who lived in the remoteſt parts of *Britain*, in a ſituation peculiarly unfavourable to the liberal arts and ſciences, ſhould, ſome time after the reſt of their countrymen had been cured of this mental imbecillity, retain ſome little remains of it, is far from being matter of wonder.

But enough has been ſaid concerning theſe idle notions: I ſhall only obſerve farther, that they are no longer believed in the Highlands and iſles.

CHAP. X.

Of the St. Kilda *methods of catching wild fowl.*

I HAVE hinted above, that the men of *Hirta* are divided into fowling parties, each of which conſiſts generally of four perſons diſtinguiſhed by their agility and ſkill. Each party muſt have at leaſt one rope about thirty fathoms long: This rope is made out of a ſtrong, raw cow hide, ſalted for that very purpoſe, and cut circularly into three thongs all of equal length; theſe thongs being cloſely twiſted together, form a three fold cord, able to ſuſtain a great weight, and durable enough to laſt for about two generations: To prevent the injuries it would otherwiſe receive from the ſharp edges of the rocks, againſt which they muſt frequently ſtrike, the cord is lined with ſheep-ſkins dreſſed in much the ſame manner.

This

This rope is a piece of furniture indiſpenſably neceſſary, and the moſt valuable implement a man of ſubſtance can be poſſeſſed of in *St. Kilda.* In the teſtament of a father, it makes the very firſt article in favour of his eldeſt ſon: Should it happen to fall to a daughter's ſhare, in default of male heirs, it is reckoned equal in value to the two beſt cows in the iſle.

By the help of ſuch ropes, the people of the greateſt proweſs and experience here, traverſe and examine rocks prodigiouſly high. Linked together in couples, each having either end of the cord faſtened about his waſte; they go frequently thro' the moſt dreadful precipices: When one of the two deſcends, his colleague plants himſelf on a ſtrong ſhelf, and takes care to have ſuch ſure footing there, that if his fellow adventurer makes a falſe ſtep, and tumbles over, he may be able to ſave him *.

Un-

* The following anecdote of the preſent ſteward of *St. Kilda*'s deputy, in the ſummer after I left the

Undoubtedly theſe are ſtupendous adventures, and equal to any thing in the feats of chivalry: I was preſent at an operation of this kind. My curioſity led me to ſee ſo uncommon a trial of ſkill: before it was half over, I was greatly ſhocked and moſt heartily ſick of it. Two noted heroes were drawn out from among all the ableſt men of the community: One of them fixed himſelf on a craggy ſhelf: His companion went down ſixty fathoms below him; and after having darted himſelf away from the face of a moſt alarming precipice, hanging over the ocean, he began to play his gambols: He ſung merrily, and laughed very heartily. The crew were inexpreſſibly happy, but for my part, I was all the while in ſuch diſtreſs of mind, that I could

iſland, will give the reader a ſpecimen of the danger they undergo, and at the ſame time of the uncommon ſtrength of the *St. Kildians:* This man obſerving his colleague loſe his hold, tumbling down from above, placed himſelf ſo firmly, upon the ſhelf where he ſtood, that he ſuſtained the weight of his friend, after falling the whole length of the rope.

not

not for my life run over half the ſcene with my eyes. The fowler after having performed ſeveral antick tricks, and given us all the entertainment his art could afford, returned in triumph, and full of his own merit, with a large ſtring of fowls round his neck, and a number of eggs in his boſom.

The *St. Kildians*, beſides the more coſtly and valuable rope already deſcribed, have another kind, made of horſe hair, which is generally about nine or ten fathoms long. This they uſe in places more acceſſible, where the game is of a more ignoble kind, and ſo much the more eaſily maſtered. They have gins made of the ſame materials, which are faſtened to the end of a ſtake deeply fixed in the ground. With theſe gins they catch a great number of wild fowl. They have other gins made likewiſe of horſe hair, which they tie to the end of their fiſhing rods, and extended to the fowls in the oppoſite cliffs, who ſometimes

times thruſt their heads through them, and by that means give the fowlers an opportunity of ſnatching them up.

During the ſummer ſeaſon the women of *Hirta*, like the maids of antient *Sparta*, are much employed in fowling: The principal game that falls to their ſhare, is the ſmall ſprightly bird called the Puffin. This fowl hatches under ground, and is eaſily traced out by means of the hole through which it makes its way; the hole it digs with its beak. The wife or daughter of a family makes a ſhort excurſion from home in a morning, attended by a dog, and catches what may be a ſufficient proviſion for the whole family, at leaſt for one day; every family in the iſland is furniſhed with one or more of thoſe extraordinary dogs. They are a mixture of the tarrier, ſpaniel, and thoſe that take the water: Of their own accord they ſally out early enough and ſoon return, bringing five or ſix puffins at a time.

Sitting

Sitting on the ſide of a hill with ſome of the people, I ſaw one of theſe little dogs ſtealing away from us: The men told me he would ſoon return with a conſiderable booty, accordingly he came back in half an hour and laid down his prey at his maſter's feet; being taught by experience and ſome friendly ſtroakings, that his owner had a juſt ſenſe of the obligation, he went off the ſecond time, and had much the ſame ſucceſs.

Theſe dogs have a wonderfully ſagacity, and are ſo trained, that they neither deſtroy the fowls themſelves, nor part with them till they meet the people of the family to which they belong, in ſpite of threatnings, flattery or bribes.

All the rocks of the iſland, whether productive of fowls or fiſh, are divided with ſingular exactneſs, according to the proportion of land each man poſſeſſes. At the end of three years, the people exchange their

their diviſions of theſe rocks, and the diſputes, if any ariſe upon this head, are terminated by the deciſion of lots: The leaſt encroachment upon a rock that belongs to another, is an injury ſcarce leſs atrocious than to ſteal a cow, and is puniſhed without any indulgence.

Nothing can poſſibly exceed the intrepidity and alertneſs of the *St. Kildians* on ſome occaſions. To land in *Stack-in-Armin*, *Stack-Birach*, and *Lij*, the rocks which lie beyond the principal iſland, is a moſt deſperate undertaking. When the weather is fair and the ſea ſmooth, they man their boat with eight of their ableſt hands: The ſteward's deputy is their ſea captain and land officer; he has an indefeaſible right to manage the helm and iſſue out orders: Theſe honours or high privileges expoſe him to greater dangers; he is the firſt perſon to land, and the laſt to quit the field. In the language of the place, this heroic adventurer is called *Gingach*.

After

After having laid by all incumbrances, his upper cloaths and his ſhoes, he faſtens a ſtrong rope around his waſte, the other end of it being in the boat; and as ſoon as the wave riſes to a proper height, he ſprings out toward the rock with all the agility he is maſter of, and imploys the whole power of his hands and feet, ſometimes of his teeth and nails, to ſettle himſelf there; if he falls back into the ſea, the affront gives him infinitely more pain than the ſevere drenching; his fellows haul him in, and he repeats the experiment: If he ſucceeds in the attempt, which is generally the caſe, he fixes himſelf in a ſecure place, makes the rope faſt and gives his companions an opportunity of coming aſhore. Four of the crew, being left in the boat where they muſt remain at their oars till the commander and his party return.

After the ſport is over, they go aboard their boat in the ſame manner: The *Gin-*

gach

gach places himſelf in his old ſtation, and after having lent his aid to the three men, he ties an end of the halter to a part of the cliff, and ſlides down upon it, if the ſea is favourable; if otherwiſe, he orders the people at the oars to row off to a proper diſtance, and jumps undauntedly into the water, theſe take him up immediately, and receive ſo brave a leader with loud claps of applauſe. This is the conſtant and only method of landing on the rocks around *Hirta*.

I was fooliſh enough to engage in an adventure of this kind at *Stack-in-Armin*, but dare not recommend the ſame operation to any friend, however ſtrong his curioſity may be. I was towed up againſt the face of a rock forty feet high: The enterprize was ſufficiently bold; but ſurely is no more than childiſh play, if compared to the manly feats of thoſe who attempt *Stack-Birach*.

This

This rock is about forty feet high, ſomething ſmooth on the top, which is formed much like a circle, the diameter about twelve feet: The angle formed by the face of the rock, and the moſt acceſſible part of the circumference of that circle is almoſt a ſort of right one; and yet ſuch is the luſt of praiſe and profit together, that they ſcale this tremendous precipice every year for the ſake of eggs and wild fowl: This hardy exploit is far from being the effect of neceſſity: But thoſe pleaſures and advantages which are dearly bought, or purſued amidſt imminent dangers, are taſted and enjoyed with greater reliſh.

Here it is to be obſerved, that there is no more than a ſingle egg found in any neſt at *Hirta*; except in the neſts of the ſea-gulls who have always three. Every bird, it is true, lays a ſecond, ſhould it be robbed of the firſt, and perhaps a third if deprived of that, the Tulmer only excepted: But in ſpite of this barrenneſs, there

there are no leſs than twenty four dozen of eggs annually taken upon the little narrow top of *Stack-Birach*; a circumſtance from which one may conclude that a vaſt number of fowls crowd together and neſtle within the compaſs of a very ſmall ſpace.

It has been already obſerved that they have but one boat in *St. Kilda*, and on it their happineſs greatly depends: If ſome fatal accident ſhould deprive them of it, they are inexpreſſibly miſerable, and no leſs dejected, than a great and once flouriſhing ſtate would be after the devaſtations of an unſucceſsful war, or the ravages made by a more conſuming peſtilence.

This poor people were in this calamitous ſituation, after I left them, in the year 1759. On the ſixth of October that year, nineteen of their men put to ſea, bound for the iſland of *Boreray*; ten of them landed there; the remaining nine in-

tended to go back to *Hirta*: For three ſucceſſive days the wind blew ſo furiouſly that there was no poſſibility of landing any where.

They ſheltered themſelves all that time under the lee ſide of one of the high rocks of *St. Kilda*, being half ſtarved with cold and hunger. On the fourth day of their diſtreſs they made for the bay, though without any proſpect of ſafety; they ſteered for the ſandy-beach on which we landed; here three of the men were waſhed away, and the remaining ſix were driven by the force of a wave on the beach, the boat was broke to pieces.

The unhappy men left at *Boreray* were ſoon made ſenſible of the common calamity, and their own miſery; their wives and ſurviving companions, made repeated ſignals in the main iſland. Finding there was no other timely reſource, after the firſt

violence of their anguiſh began to abate, they bethought themſelves of ſecuring ſome wild fowl for proviſions; they lived on theſe and the fleſh of the ſheep that graze there all the year over. Before they quitted this priſon, the ſkins of theſe ſheep, and of the larger fowls tacked together with feathers, were all the clothing that ſome of them wore: What a groteſque figure they made in this diſtreſsful ſituation, one may eaſily imagine.

It was providential that *Boreray* was the place of their exile. The *Staller*'s houſe or curious grotto, of which an account has been given already, afforded them a very comfortable habitation. Here they ſlept ſecurely all night, and loitered away the whole winter ſeaſon. They had taken the neceſſary precaution to dry ſome turf in the beſt way they could, and enough of that to laſt till the ſpring ſhould be pretty far advanced.

On

On the return of the wild fowl, in the month of *March*, after having relieved their own neceſſities, they laid up in their ſtore-houſe a cargo of theſe, ſufficient to load the ſtewards eight-oared boat. Their friends at home, willing to give them the ſatisfaction of knowing that their ſhare of the arable ground was not neglected, turned up ten different ſmall ſpots of ground on the northern face of the hill which ſtood over againſt them. In fine, the ten priſoners remained in this ſituation without ſuſtaining any great loſs, other than that of being much out of humour, till relieved in the month of *June* by the Steward.

CHAP. XI.

Of the people of Hirta. *Their number, diſeaſes, perſons, dreſs, language, genius, manners and cuſtoms.*

IT is a fact indiſputably true, that the inhabitants of *St. Kilda* were much more numerous heretofore, than they are at preſent. Whether this viſible decreaſe is to be reſolved wholly into phyſical cauſes, or whether it ought to be imputed to political ones in part, I ſhall not determine, I ſhall only venture to affirm, that the iſland, if under proper regulations, might eaſily ſupport three hundred ſouls. *Martin*, who viſited it about the end of the laſt century, found an hundred and eighty perſons there.

The number is now dwindled down to eighty-eight: an extraordinary change this

in

in leſs than two generations: It is true indeed, that a contagious diſtemper ſwept away the greateſt part of this people about four and thirty years ago.

The diſtemper which in ſo great a meaſure depopulated *St. Kilda*, was the ſmall pox: One of the people there, upon coming to *Harris*, was ſeized with it, and died there: Unluckily, one of his friends carried his cloaths away next year, and theſe, it is thought, communicated the infection at *Hirta*.

Very few of that little community eſcaped the plague of that year; of twenty-one families, four grown perſons only remained, and theſe had the burden of twenty-ſix orphans to ſupport: That theſe four lived, was owing to what the very men who were ſaved muſt have at firſt called a ſingular misfortune.

Before the diſtemper was propagated, three men and eight boys were ſent into one of their iſlands, with a deſign of catching Solan-Geeſe for the benefit of the whole community: An univerſal confuſion and mortality enſuing at home, they continued there from the middle of *Auguſt*, till about the middle of *May* in the following year. The boat in which theſe men had been wafted over into that iſland was brought back to *Hirta*, before the diſtemper became epidemical. Had they been at home with the reſt, it is more than probable, that their fate had been the ſame with that of their friends.

Before this memorable year, the ſmall pox had never viſited *St. Kilda*: The conſequence muſt have been, that every genuine *Hirta* man was an abſolute ſtranger to the proper method of managing it; all medicines, and thoſe who adminiſter them, lay quite out of their way; and it is very probable,

bable, that the groſs aliments always uſed in that place, perhaps beyond the common rules of temperance, and, together with that diſadvantage, the habitual uncleanneſs of the natives, to which may be added the feculent air pent up within their dirty hovels, had a particular quality to inflame that cruel diſeaſe into a more than ordinary degree of virulence.

This terrible diſtemper has never ſince viſited *St. Kilda*.

The *St. Kilda* infants are peculiarly ſubject to an extraordinary kind of ſickneſs: On the fourth, fifth or ſixth night after their birth, many of them give up ſucking; on the ſeventh, their gums are ſo clenched together, that it is impoſſible to get any thing down their throats: Soon after this ſymptom appears, they are ſeized with convulſive fits, and after ſtruggling againſt exceſſive torments, till their little ſtrength is

exhauſted, die generally on the eighth day. I have ſeen two of them expire after ſuch agonies. It is ſurpriſing that *Martin*, who was himſelf bred to phyſic, and a perſon of unbounded curioſity, ſhould have paſt over in ſilence a circumſtance ſo very ſtriking, ſuppoſing that this very uncommon diſtemper had got any footing at *Hirta* in his time.

Another very remarkable diſeaſe that attacks this place occaſionally, is a very ſevere cold, ſometimes attended with ſpitting of viſcous bloody matter, every time the *Harris* people come among them, or ſtrangers from any other quarter.

" They have generally good voices (ſays " Mr. *Martin*) and good lungs; to this " the Solan-Gooſe egg ſupped raw doth " not a little contribute; they are ſeldom " troubled with a cough, except at the " ſteward's landing, which is no leſs rare

" than

" than firmly believed by the inhabitants
" of the adjacent iſlands.

" Thoſe of *St. Kilda*, upon the whole,
" gave me the following account: That
" they always contracted a cough upon the
" ſteward's landing; and it proves a great
" deal more troubleſome to them in the
" night time, they then diſtilling a great
" deal of phlegm. This indiſpoſition
" continues for ſome ten, twelve or four-
" teen days; the moſt ſovereign remedy
" againſt this diſeaſe, is their great and be-
" loved catholicon, the gibain, *(id eſt)* the
" fat of their fowls, with which they ſtuff
" the ſtomach of the Solan-Gooſe, in fa-
" ſhion of a pudding; this they put in
" the infuſion of oat-meal, which in their
" language they call brochan; but it is
" not ſo effectual now as at the beginning,
" becauſe of the frequent uſe of it. I told
" them plainly, that I thought all this no-
" tion of infection was but a mere fancy;
" and that at leaſt it could not always

" hold; at which they ſeemed offend-
" ed, ſaying, 'That never any before
" the miniſter and myſelf was heard
" to doubt of the truth of it, which is
" plainly demonſtrated upon the landing
" of every boat; adding further, that every
" deſign was for ſome end, but here there
" was no room for any, where nothing
" could be propoſed. But, for confirma-
" tion of the whole, they appealed to the
" caſe of infants at the breaſt, who were
" likeways very ſubject to this cough, but
" could not be capable of affecting it; and
" therefore, in their opinion, they were in-
" fected by ſuch as lodge in their houſes.
" There were ſcarce young or old in the
" iſland whom I did not examine parti-
" cularly upon the head, and all agreed in
" the confirmation of it. They add far-
" ther, that when any foreign goods are
" brought thither, then the cough is of
" longer duration than otherwiſe. They
" remark, that if the fever has been among
" thoſe of the ſteward's retinue, though

" before

" before their arrival there, ſome of the in-
" habitants are infected with it. If any
" of the inhabitants of *St. Kilda* chance to
" live, though but a ſhort ſpace, in the
" iſlands of *Harris*, *Sky*, or any of the ad-
" jacent iſlands, they become meagre, and
" contract ſuch a cough, that the gibain
" muſt be had, or elſe they muſt return to
" their native ſoil. This gibain is more
" ſovereign for removing of coughs, being
" uſed by any other iſlanders than thoſe
" of *St. Kilda*, becauſe they love to have
" it frequently in their meat as well as
" drink; by which too frequent uſe of it
" it loſes its virtue. It is very remarkable,
" that after this infected cough was over,
" we ſtrangers, and the inhabitants of
" *St. Kilda*, making up the number of
" about two hundred and fifty, though we
" had frequently aſſembled upon the oc-
" caſion of divine ſervice, yet neither
" young nor old among us all did ſo much
" as cough once more." This is the ac-
count which Mr. *Martin* gave of this in-
fection

fection in the year 1697. The ſame account has been often confirmed to me by many in my pariſh, whoſe veracity I had no occaſion to call in queſtion; and who viſited the iſland almoſt annually ſince that period, and never knew the inhabitants to have once eſcaped this contagion. The honourable and reverend ſociety, and ſome ingenious gentlemen, who joined me in my ſuſpicion as to the truth of this fact, recommended to me to enquire into it very particularly: And I can aſſure them and the public, that every man in *St. Kilda*, and every man in *Harris* that ever viſited *St. Kilda*, are unanimous in affirming it to be true. Though my teſtimony may ſerve to corroborate a fact, which I once could not believe I cannot deny it without committing a treſpaſs againſt truth. When I landed, all the inhabitants, except two women in child-bed, enjoyed perfect health, and continued to do ſo for two days. I began to conclude, with pleaſure, that my viſit would do them no injury.

But

But I concealed my ſuſpicions, that I might not tempt them to impoſe upon me, in order to prevent me from detecting a trick, which was perhaps originally contrived for ſome political ends, (to juſtify, for inſtance, their averſion to ſtrangers, who often come to oppreſs them) and continued for ages afterwards, from a pride which often makes mankind reluctant to confeſs, that they were either ignorantly or deſignedly miſtaken. This far-fetched ſuſpicion had no foundation. The *St. Kildians* are fond of ſtrangers, and it is improbable that a trick of this kind, ſuppoſing we could aſſign a ſufficient cauſe for contriving it, could be carried on by the whole community ſo very artfully, as to prevent a diſcovery for ſo many years. But my doubts and ſuſpicions were ſoon removed. On the third day after I landed, ſome of the inhabitants diſcovered evident ſymptoms of a violent cold, ſuch as hoarſeneſs, coughing, diſcharging of phlegm, *&c.* and in eight days, they were all infected with this uncommon

common diſeaſe, attended in ſome with ſevere head-achs and feveriſh diſorders: So that without rejecting the moſt convincing of all evidences, the evidence of my ſenſes, I was not able to ſuſpect that their complaints at that time, were either feigned or imaginary. Before I went to the iſland, I was willing to imagine, upon the ſuppoſition that this ſtrange diſtemper gets in among that people on ſuch occaſions, that thoſe only who aſſiſted in dragging the boat to land, and muſt have wrought themſelves into a great heat, ſo as to have rendered themſelves very ſuſceptable of ſuch a diſorder, were the only perſons affected; but upon a ſtrict examination, I found that the whole body of the people, they who ſtayed at home, as well as they who laboured hard in aſſiſting the ſtrangers, were ſeized with it.

Another conjecture I had fondly entertained, that the violent agitation into which the people of this iſland had thrown themſelves,

ſelves, frequently by over-acting their part in drawing up the *Harris* boats to land, muſt have made them obnoxious to this ſevere cold, which might afterwards infect thoſe who ſtayed at home, was ſufficiently confuted by a very plain argument. Some of his Majeſty's troops had occaſion to land at *Hirta*, in the year 1746, and though the natives gave them no manner of aſſiſtance, nor were of conſequence over-heated, by a violent exertion of their ſtrength, nor hurt by the ſalt water; at the ſame time it is certain, at leaſt the natives and ſome of the ſteward's ſervants, who were then in *St. Kilda*, told me that the cold above deſcribed attacked them with uncommon fury; and the *St. Kildians*, as I ſhall have occaſion to obſerve below, without any prejudice to their health, undergo greater hardſhips and fatigues almoſt every day, than on occaſions of this kind. A gentleman of ſkill, who favoured me with his opinion, calls this cold *an annual epidemic*, which will return periodically, whether ſtrangers

ſtrangers viſit the iſland or not. It is true, indeed, that the ſteward is obliged to viſit this iſland ſometime between the end of *April* and the beginning of *September*, as it is quite inacceſſable in any other ſeaſon of the year; but he ſometimes lands here in *May*, ſometimes in *June*, *July* and *Auguſt*; and is it not very ſtrange, that an annual epidemic ſhould return in *May*, if the ſteward lands in that month, but not till the month of *Auguſt* if the ſteward delays his viſit ſo long? And is it not equally ſtrange, that it ſhould return three or four times in the ſummer ſeaſon, if the ſteward ſhould land ſo oft, and only once, if they have no more viſits from him? The preſent ſteward's brother, who is a clergyman of our church, and a man of learning and veracity, told me, that he ſaw the inhabitants of *St. Kilda* ſeized with this cold three different times, upon the landing of his father's boat as often, in the ſpace of eight weeks.

I had a curious enough anecdote, concerning Mrs. *M'Leod*, a native of *Sky*, and widow of the late miniſter of *St. Kilda*, confirmed to me by herſelf and others: For three years after ſhe went to the iſland ſhe eſcaped the general infection; but afterwards being as it were, in ſome meaſure, become a native of the place, ſhe was ſeized with it annually during her ſtay in the iſland.

The ſmell of their houſes, cloaths and breath, is very offenſive to a ſtranger; he is uneaſy when a *St. Kildian* is near him, and for two or three days he breaths a thick loathſome air. A man would have no difficulty in believing, that the ſtranger ſhould be affected with ſome uncommon diſorder on his landing; but that the quantity of freſh air which he carries about him, or the ſmell of his cloaths, or breath, ſhould affect the natives, is very improbable and indeed quite unaccountable; although they will tell you, that your company for ſome

time is as offenſive to them, as their's can be to you; and that they find a difficulty in breathing a light ſharp air when they are near you.

I confeſs I was long a ſceptic, as to the reality of this diſtemper; but the account which Mr. *Martin* gave of it in 1697, the repeated aſſurances given me by men of underſtanding, and undiſputed veracity, above all, ocular demonſtration, convinced me that my doubts were ill founded. There are many appearances in nature which are unaccountable to us, and of which we muſt ever remain ignorant; and a fact which cannot be accounted for, may be ſupported by evidences which will force conviction.

The more adult perſons in this iſland are remarkably healthy, and leſs ſubject than others to diſtempers.

It has been already told, that the inhabitants of *St. Kilda* are now decreaſed

down to eighty-eight ſouls: Of theſe thirty-eight are males, and fifty are females. This great inequality of the ſex may be very rationally explained, without adopting the doctrine taught by writers of voyages and travels, who will have it, though in direct oppoſition to the eſtabliſhed order of Providence every where elſe, that nature, by ſending more women than men into the world, in ſome countries, muſt have meant to introduce polygamy there. In all maritime or warlike nations, males are, it is plain, more ſubject to untimely deaths than the females; and among the *St. Kildians*, though neither a fighting or commercial people, the caſe is the ſame, and the reaſon obvious. Some of their men are deſtroyed by rocks; and in all countries the males are more ready to run away from out of the reach of tyrants, becauſe more obnoxious to the reſentment of ſuch, and better able to ſhift for themſelves.

All the adult males now at *Hirta*, are no more than twenty two. Theſe are ſtout hardy fellows, and though generally ſpeaking ſhort of ſtature, extremely thick and brawny, but rather clumſily made than nicely proportioned; they are remarkably ſtrong, carry huge burdens, and will tug at the oar for many hours, with an almoſt undiminiſhed vigour. In their nocturnal expeditions they undergo great hardſhips, and make very light of the fatigue and dangers attending theſe, if fortune is propitious.

The women here are moſtly handſome, and their complexion freſh and lively, as their features are regular and fine: The females in the iſlands moſt contiguous to *Hirta*, are in theſe reſpects greatly inferior to them; there are ſome of them, who if properly dreſſed, and genteely educated, would, in my opinion, be reckoned extraordinary beauties in the gay world.

The cloathing of this people is quite coarſe, and made for warmth; all the colours known among them, till of late, were black, white, grey, and brown, the natural colours of their ſheep, and yellow was their only artificial one. There is a plant, in much the greateſt parts of the weſtern iſles, which the inhabitants call Rue: I am a ſtranger to its true *Engliſh* name; it may be the ſame, for aught I know, with the *Ruta* of the *Romans*; and a *Latin* proverb*, which imports, that *a perſon or thing is confined within a narrow compaſs*, ſeems to favour that notion. This plant riſes in the ſummer time about a ſpan length above the ground, having a ſmall hard ſtem which carries a yellow odoriferous flower: It loves a ſandy ground, and ſpreads its long, tough and numerous roots very far: Theſe roots if pounded and boiled, produce a durable red colour, which grows brighter every day: The *St. Kildians* are unacquainted with the art of dying with

* In rutæ folium conjeci.

this root, though univerſally practiſed in the other iſles.

All the linen manufactured among them is a mere trifle, and extremely coarſe: One holiday ſhirt will ſatisfy the ambition of the moſt elegant or foppiſh perſon in *St. Kilda*, what they wear next to their ſkin, upon ordinary occaſions, is made of wool.

The weavers here underſtand their buſineſs very ill. Every man is the taylor and ſhoe-maker of his own family: All the leather of this iſland, and thoſe neareſt to it, is tanned with the tormentil root, and done to great perfection*.

The *St. Kildians* ſpeak a very corrupt dialect of the *Galic*, adulterated with a

* The *St. Kildians* lay the leather, when ſufficiently prepared for that purpoſe, in the warm infuſion of this bark for two nights, and afterwards keep it in the hollow of a rock, which is under water at every full ſea, with ſome of this root pounded about it, until it is ſufficiently tanned.

little

little mixture of the *Norvegian* tongue: They have many words and cant phraſes, quite unintelligible to their neighbours: Their manner of pronouncing is attended with a very remarkable peculiarity: Every man, woman and child has an uncorrigible liſping: Not one of them are able to give their proper ſounds to the liquid letters. This incapacity univerſal here and no where elſe, I ſuppoſe, may have been originally owing, perhaps, to a vicious affectation of imitating the manner in which ſome great man among them, either a ſteward or venerable eccleſiaſtic, did pronounce. To reſolve this defect or impropriety into the conſtruction of their organs, the nature of their food, or the temper of the climate, three ſuppoſitions that have been made, will hardly ſtand the teſt of reaſon. We are told ſomewhere, that the courtiers about *Alexander* the Great, ſtudied much to wry their necks, in imitation of their maſter; and we know that ſome perſons affect to liſp, out of a fond

conceit that there is a peculiar ſweetneſs, or harmonious ſoftneſs, in ſounds ſo pronounced.

The power of muſic is felt every where: That divine art has charms enough to conquer the moſt ſavage heart. The *St. Kildians* are enthuſiaſtically fond of it, whether in the vocal or inſtrumental way: The very loweſt tinklings of the latter, throws them into extaſy of joy. I have ſeen them dancing to a bad violin much to my ſatisfaction: Even the old women in the iſle act their part in the great aſſemblies, and the moſt agile dancers are here, as well as every where elſe, very great favourites.

They delight much in ſinging, and their voices are abundantly tuneful. The women, while cutting down their barley in a field, or grinding their grain on their hand mills in the houſe, are almoſt conſtantly employed in that way; and the men, if pulling at the oar, exert all the ſtrength of their

their ſkill in animating the party, by chanting away ſome ſpirited ſongs adapted to the buſineſs in hand. The ſeamen of *Athens* practiſed the ſame cuſtom.

It will be thought that a very ſmall portion of the poetical ſpirit, if any, has fallen to the ſhare of illiterate men, doomed to live in a cold, foggy and barbarous climate, into which the arts and ſciences have never travelled. The air of *Hirta* is undoubtedly groſs, and it is certain that *Apollo* and the nine ſiſters have never been invoked there; but I will venture to affirm, that one may eaſily diſcover ſtrong ſparks of fire, and ſome noble flights of fancy, in their otherwiſe homely compoſitions. Every region, however cloudy or diſtant from the ſun, is capable of producing a great and original genius. The fogs of *Bœotia*, and the mountains of *Thrace*, have given birth to illuſtrious poets, while the ſcorching plains of *Afric* have not furniſhed the world with any curioſities of that kind: It will be eaſier to trace

trace out the Muſes in *Lapland* and *Iceland*, than to find either their ſpirit or works under the line.

The ſubjects handled by the bards of *St. Kilda*, in their odes, are the beauty and accompliſhments of their favourites among the fair ſex, the heroic actions of their friends, their dexterity in climbing rocks, their ſuperior ſkill in fiſhing, their extraordinary vigour, ſkill and conſtancy while at the oar, beſides the common topics of perſonal advantages and intellectual merit.

Could it happen that one of a great poetical genius ſhould for ſome time live in this truely romantic place; a place that always preſents grand objects and ſtrange landſkips, a boundleſs ocean, immenſe precipices, hills unſung, whoſe ſummits are loſt in the clouds, a prodigious variety of birds, and theſe beyond the reach of numbers, ſometimes a confuſed heap of monſtrous ſea animals, and at all times a moſt curious race of intelligent

telligent beings, to ſay nothing of noble cataracts, purling ſtreams, and chryſtal fountains, equal perhaps to thoſe of *Helicon* and *Caſtalia*; it is my opinion that he might very eaſily, to ſpeak with *Milton*, purſue

Things unattempted yet in proſe or rhyme.

All the *St. Kildians*, except three or four ſmatterers, are perfectly illiterate. The firſt perſon who introduced the uſe of letters among them, was one *Buchan*, who officiated in the ſtation of a catechiſt here during the reign of Queen *Anne*. The ſame man was afterwards, at the deſire of the Society for propagating Chriſtian Knowledge, ordained a miniſter by the Preſbytery of *Edinburgh*, and ſent into this iſle in that quality.

By the voluntary contributions of ſome piouſly diſpoſed perſons in that city, *Buchan* had been enabled, before his ordination, to train up ſome *Hirta* boys at his ſchool:

ſchool: The progreſs made by theſe was, I am afraid, conſiderably greater than any thing that has been done there during the incumbency of his ſucceſſors. The truth is, the people have an averſion, not eaſily to be conquered, for all foreign languages; and the reaſon is plain; they have no kind of intercourſe with thoſe who ſpeak or underſtand theſe tongues: The conſequence is, that religious conſiderations only can prevail with them, to ſubject their children to the expenſive drudgery of learning the *Engliſh*; and we all know that conſiderations of that kind, operate too ſlowly, in all places, when oppoſed by temporal advantages and the power of cuſtom.

The iſlanders in general are unfaſhionable enough to poſſeſs the virtue of hoſpitality in an eminent degree: In ſuch remote places, the wiſe leſſons of a parſimonious exactneſs have not hitherto been taught with any great ſucceſs: To oblige the wealthy, to relieve the poor, to entertain

tain the ſtranger and weary traveller, nay to leave their doors open to every one, were heretofore the reigning maxims there. The *St. Kildians* retain much of this primitive ſpirit; they are remarkably generous and open hearted: To me they paid more than a juſt deference, in this and every other reſpect; and to the crew they made many more preſents of eggs and wild fowl, than either their taſte or neceſſities demanded.

In their own way they are very complaiſant and mannerly; the women never approached us without low curtſies; and the men never addreſſed the ſtrangers, but in terms of the moſt profound reſpect.

They marry early, and their gallantries are generally innocent: Impurities faſhionable elſewhere, if committed here at any time, are never unattended with infamy. The character given to the old *Germans*, is undoubtedly applicable to this people: "No

"No one among them makes a jeſt of "vice; to debauch, or be debauched, is "not called the way of the world*." Here high portioned wives never rule their huſbands: Here a cruel ſtep-mother never perſecutes her guiltleſs ſtep-ſon for the ſake of pelf: Here the nuptial tie is always held ſacred.

An honeſt deſire of preventing or removing the inconveniencies of a ſingle life, or pure diſintereſted love, are the ruling paſſions in the advances they make to matrimony. Should a young fellow be poſſeſſed of a ſpade, rake, creel, and fowling rope, he marries without any fear or ſolicitude, will maintain himſelf, his wife, and children, live contentedly on a ſmall plot of ground, and pay his rents punctually with barley and feathers.

Drunkenneſs is not yet introduced here: But the *St. Kildians* could be reconciled

* Tacit. de mor. Germ.

with-

without any difficulty to ſpirituous liquors. They have a moſt violent paſſion for tobacco; a branch of luxury, of which the total want of that commodity can only cure them: They buy an annual ſtore of this favourite plant from the ſteward, which, in ſpite of a very ſtrong appetite, they muſt take care to manage with the exacteſt œconomy, as it is impoſſible to procure a new ſupply, till the market of another year returns with him. For this univerſally bewitching article, and for ſome other goods indiſpenſibly neceſſary, ſalt, iron, and timber particularly, they barter away their cows, ſheep, grain and feathers.

Their riches conſiſt in theſe commodities: They have frequently heard of gold, without thirſting for it: they have not touched coin of any kind, I believe, before this age: they are now perhaps poſſeſſed of a ſcore of ſhillings and ſome braſs pence, more than will pay off the debt of their whole ſtate.

ſtate. *Tacitus* was at a loſs to determine, whether the Gods who denied ſilver and gold to the *Germans*, were propitious to them or angry: Had he been at *Hirta*, I am apt to believe, his ſcepticiſm with regard to that point, would have been ſoon cured. The people there have ſcarce any wants, and conſequently ſcarce any deſires of the pecuniary kind.

CHAP. XII.

Of the ſtate of Religion at St. Kilda, *in different periods.*

IN the former part of this account, I have endeavoured to ſhew, that Chriſtianity was introduced into this iſle by ſome one of thoſe primitive teachers, who in this country and in *Ireland*, were called *Keledees*, or the ſervants of God. If one conſider that ſpirit of converting, by which theſe honeſt primitive Chriſtians were animated, and their violent paſſion for a ſolitary life at the ſame time, nothing can be more probable.

It is impoſſible to diſcover by whom the little holy fabrics, dedicated to *Chriſt*, *Columba*, and *Brendan*, in the language of that place called temples, were erected: But we have reaſon to believe, that they

were built before genuine Popery came to its full maturity in this kingdom.

After the eccleſiaſtics of the *Roman* communion, had extended their power and uſurpations to the remote parts of *Scotland*, it is probable that ſome few of them did occaſionally viſit *St. Kilda*. That not one of that order had his conſtant reſidence there for ſome time before the reformation was carried into the north-weſt iſlands, appears from a paſſage in *Buchanan*, on whoſe teſtimony, in a matter of this kind, any one may ſafely depend: " The inhabitants of *Hirta*, ſays he, are totally unacquainted with all arts, and more eſpecially with religion. The proprietor of the iſland, after the ſummer ſolſtice ſends thither his procurator, and in his company a prieſt, who is to baptize the children born in the preceding year: But in the abſence of a prieſt, on that occaſion, every one baptizes his own children*.

* Hiſt. lib. I. c. 41.

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In this ſtate, matters continued for about an hundred years longer: The *St. Kildians* wanted teachers regularly ordained all that time. That ſome deſigning avaricious men exerciſed the more eaſy parts of the ſacerdotal function in that interval, one at leaſt of that character, appears from a merry ſtory, which the ludicrous deciſion of a gentleman has tranſmitted to poſterity.

This gentleman was called Col. *M'Donald*, the father of that Colonel *Alexander M'Donald*, who was ſent into *Scotland* by the Marquis of *Antrim*, at the head of a body of *Iriſh* ſoldiers, in the reign of King *Charles* the Firſt, and ſignally diſtinguiſhed himſelf in our civil wars under *Montroſe*. This gentleman having made himſelf obnoxious to the laws fled to *St. Kilda*.

An impoſtor there claiming a right to tithes or ſome religious perquiſites, a part of the people refuſed to pay the tax, and

pleaded that he was abſolutely unqualified for the prieſtly office. Their great objection was, that this ghoſtly father was not able to repeat the *Pater-Noſter*. The pretended teacher had a faction to ſupport his cauſe, at length the two contending parties, after many hot altercations, ſubmitted the matter in diſpute to the more learned ſtranger. Mr. *M'Donald*, either attached to the new doctor of divinity, or willing to divert himſelf and others with a witty conceit, declared to the whole aſſembly, with a very ſerious air, that in the whole courſe of his life and reading, he had not ſeen a Clergyman depoſed, or turned out of his living, for being unacquainted with the Lord's prayer. The party in the oppoſition were either ſatisfied or ſilenced, and the intruder began immediately to levy his taxes.

About fifty years after the reign of this almoſt harmleſs uſurper, a perſon of much greater abilities, and of more dangerous views,

views, ſcorning to be confined within the mediocrity of eaſy enough circumſtances, formed the bold deſign of raiſing a little ſpiritual empire here. This man, though perfectly illiterate, had penetration enough to ſee, that an implicite belief of every thing taught by an ambitious eccleſiaſtic, is an excellent foundation for the great ſuperſtructure of a blind ſubmiſſion on the one part, and an abſolute power in every thing on the other. The name of this impoſtor was *Roderic*, who for the vaſtneſs of his ambition or the large ſize of his body, was by his country men dignified with the lofty epithet of the Great.

Martin, in his deſcription of the weſtern iſlands, has given us a ſhort hiſtory of this ſtrange man. To ſave my reader the trouble of having recourſe to a book now rarely found, and to give at the ſame time a connected ſtate of the progreſs of religion or

ſuperſtition at *St. Kilda*, through different periods, I ſhall take the liberty to give a ſhort review of this ſame extraordinary man's life and character.

The impoſtor was a native of *Hirta*, and though born in this land of darkneſs and ſimplicity, had a vaſt ſhare of ſagacity and cunning. *Ambition* was his leading principle, and *Luſt* his ſecondary paſſion, *Avarice* was another ſtrong ingredient in the compoſition of his mind.

He had frequent occaſions to obſerve, that his countrymen were an ignorant, ſilly, injudicious rabble, and withal very deſirous of having a ſpiritual father among them. Conſcious of his own ſuperior abilities, and ready to embrace an opportunity ſo favourable to his extravagant notions of greatneſs, he laid the deſign of enſlaving the whole community to which he belonged, and of rendering himſelf the

Lord

Lord of their conſciences, freedom, and fortunes. To carry this great ſcheme into execution, he had too much ſenſe not to ſee, that it was neceſſary for him to aſſume the character of an Ambaſſador from Heaven. The legiſlators of antient times, *Zoroaſter* and *Zamolxis*, *Pythagoras*, *Zaleucus*, *Minos*, *Rhadamanthus*, *Romulus*, *Numa*, *Thor* and *Wodin*, ſupported their claims to power, and eſtabliſhed their laws by the help of thoſe divine revelations to which they pretended. All theſe men made religion the great engine of their policy: They ſaw clearly that government muſt ſoon be unhinged, in a country where downright irreligion prevails. Without a conſtant train of miracles, or the general belief of a providence and a future ſtate of retribution, it is impoſſible that great ſocieties can flouriſh or ſtand for any long time, and this is a demonſtration, that religion though much abuſed, and very often perverted, muſt have come originally from the father of mankind, the founder of ſocie-

ties, the author of order, of government, and every thing that is conducive to the happineſs of individuals, or collective bodies of men. If any one ſhould teach a contrary doctrine, we ſhould wiſh him no heavier puniſhment than to live for a long courſe of years in a ſociety of Atheiſts, or men who are under no obligation to practice the virtues of ſocial life.

The impoſtor of *St. Kilda*, was an abſolute ſtranger to all the legiſlators of antient nations. But his own unconfined and ſelf taught genius ſuggeſted to him, that he could not poſſibly rule the kingdom of *Hirta*, a great kingdom in his eye, without the forgery of a divine commiſſion. Full of his grand project, and poſſeſſing an imagination fertile in expedients, he affected for ſome time to be much out of conceit with the world, and to be fond of retirement, ſpiritual exerciſes, and a contemplative life. After he had thus prepared himſelf for the part he had to act,

he at laſt appeared on the ſtage. At firſt he whiſpered in corners, and with a ſeeming reluctancy, that he had ſeen *John the Baptiſt* face to face, and had heard his voice. Finding that this grave tale was heard with attention and a pious awe, he took the liberty to make the ſame declarations in public, with an undaunted impudence, and in a very ſolemn manner.

This was not enough for his purpoſe; and therefore he took care to give them repeated aſſurances afterwards. Aſſurances ſupported by ſtrong aſſeverations, and confirmed by the ſtrictneſs of a very auſtere life, that this great ſaint or demigod, who had the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, Earth and Hell in his right hand, converſed familiarly with him his choſen ſervant every other day: Nay, that he gave him an unlimitted authority to do what he pleaſed in *St. Kilda*, while acting agreeably to his directions, and that all thoſe who

who ſhould preſume to diſpute againſt his miſſion, counteract his laws, or violate his ſacred perſon, would incur eternal damnation in a future world, and be overtaken by ſome ſignal judgement in this.

Having eſtabliſhed his authority in ſome degree, by the ſtrength of impudence and the help of ſome holy tricks, he began at laſt to harangue in public: His lectures flowing eaſily from the copious ſource of a ſtrong natural eloquence, were heard with the devoteſt attention, and believed implicitly. With the aſſiſtance of auricular confeſſion, an article of faith and practice highly important to every ſpiritual tyrant, he was ſoon in the ſecret of every domeſtic tranſaction in the iſland, an advantage which rendered him very formidable.

The women were ſoon brought to be at his devotion: If any one of them, whoſe underſtanding or conſcience he had not been able to debauch, entirely rejected his ad-

addreſſes, he immediately commenced a criminal proſecution againſt her in name of his maſter. The *Baptiſt* had it ſeems told him, that this rebellious woman had committed ſome flagitious action. To convince the public of her guilt, he laid his commands on her, in the moſt abſolute manner, to walk over a beach made up of looſe round ſtones. If a ſingle ſtone was removed out of its place, or rattled againſt another, the accuſed perſon was declared guilty by his Inquiſitor, and delivered over to his own ſecular arm. The puniſhment inflicted on the unhappy criminal, was a complication of infamy, pain, and danger, ſhe was to ſtand naked under a high cataract, and a mighty torrent of water, which had been dammed up for ſome time, for that very purpoſe, was upon a ſignal given, let looſe upon her with great violence.

To walk over a long beach of ſtones, looſe, round, and not large, without moving

ing one of them, would have been manifeſtly a greater miracle than with Queen *Emma*, to tread nine glowing plow-ſhares unhurt, or to go with the *Hirpini* of *Italy* through a burning heap of timber. *Varro* obſerves, that theſe *Hirpini* had a medicinal preparation which ſaved their feet from the power of the flames and live coals; and it is more than probable, that Queen *Emma* uſed preſervatives of the ſame nature at her ordeal trial, if that part of her hiſtory be true: But the unhappy woman of *St. Kilda* had not the ſmalleſt chance of eſcaping.

The people of *Hirta*, were ſtupid enough, like many great nations, to ſwallow down every thing that was offered to them, however abſurd, by a teacher ſent them from God. The holy villain declared to them, that the *Baptiſt* had conſecrated for his own uſe a ſpot of ground, which his choſen ſervant called *John's Hillock*. If any beaſt was ſacrilegious enough to touch that hallowed

lowed ground, though very ill fenced, it was immediately killed, and by much the greateſt part of the victim belonged to the prieſt, who had converſed very frequently with the Saint on that little-hill. One of the preſent inhabitants told me, that his father after having unfortunately diſobliged the impoſtor, whoſe ſovereign will was the only law of the land, thought it prudent to give him a ſheep by way of peace-offering, begging at the ſame time, that he would interceed for him with the *Baptiſt*. The oblation was ſent into the prophet's houſe, but was rejected with ſcorn, indignation and ſtrong menaces, becauſe of a blemiſh. A cat had unluckily run away with one of its kidneys, and the ſinner in order to obtain a plenary remiſſion, gave a new victim of the ſame kind next day.

In this way did an impure, avaricious, inſolent man, continue to debauch the obſequious part of the women,——to puniſh thoſe who were virtuous——and

to

to lord it over the men in their conſciences, rights and liberties for ſix whole years. I have already remarked, that private confeſſion was his great engine of policy, and one may add uncleanneſs: All that were initiated into his myſteries, were taught, like the votaries of the *Eleuſinian Ceres*, to conceal every thing under the pain of Hell fire.

The deluded people had ſuch a profound veneration for this little *Mahomet*, that the ſecret would have never tranſpired without an accident. Some of the ſteward's ſervants found this mighty Demagogue and his infatuated diſciples, aſſembled together under ſilence of night. The Steward was at great pains to find out the meaning of this nocturnal conventicle. The whole impoſture was at laſt diſcovered.

Mr. *John Campbell*, the miniſter of *Harris*, Mr. *Martin*, the frequently quoted author of the deſcription, and the ſteward, had no

ſmall

ſmall difficulty in perſuading *Roderic* to leave *St. Kilda*. He had been frequently told, that the proprietor of the iſland had a ſtrong curioſity to ſee him, and was determined to promote him to places of honour and profit. His vanity was flattered, as the gentlemen apprehended, that the *St. Kildians* might aſſemble tumultuouſly about them; and the falſe prophet had been aſſured, that the fame of his ſanctity, eloquence, and extraordinary illumination, had ſpread far and near: But he was too ſharp ſighted not to ſee the ſnare.

After a long ſtruggle he gave his conſent at laſt, was brought to *Dunvegan* caſtle, confeſſed all his crimes, and made a publick recantation before the preſbytry of *Sky*, which may be ſeen in their records.

The unhappy man went through a courſe of pennance in that iſland, travelling about from pariſh to pariſh like a con-

demned malefactor, and declaring every where before the ſeveral congregations, that he had acted the part of a conſummate villain, with all the outward marks of an internal contrition. All this happened in the reign of King *William*.

The memory of this impoſtor is to this day deteſted at *St. Kilda*, and his name loaded with imprecations. His poſterity are now no more than two women, and theſe greatly abhorred. One of them a very ſcandalous and wicked perſon, was the laſt pretender here to the faculty of being ſecond ſighted. This unworthy woman inherits her grandfather's cunning, ambition, avarice and lewdneſs, in a very high degree. I took an opportunity of converſing with her, and enquiring concerning her ſecond ſight, ſhe with her wonted inſincerity diſclaimed all pretenſions to this gift, though formerly very ready to boaſt of it.

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In the year 1704 *Buchan*, the ſame that has been mentioned in the former chapter, was ſent into this iſland to inſtruct the poor people, who had been too long abuſed, and afterwards too much neglected. This man, after a very warm recommendation by the general aſſembly of our national church, was greatly encouraged by that excellent gentleman, who poſſeſſed the eſtate of his family at that time, *Roderic M'Leod* of *M'Leod*.

After *Buchan* had been ordained, the Society, who before their public fund had riſen to any conſiderable ſum, had contributed for him out of their own private purſes, ſettled a ſalary upon him in the year 1710. This miſſionary was diligent enough, and poſſeſſed a much greater ſhare of zeal than his two immediate ſucceſſors. The preſent incumbent, the fourth proteſtant miniſter of *St. Kilda*, is a man of ſenſe, virtue and piety: But the precarious ſtate of his health, diſables him from

doing all the ſervice he would incline, and will probably in a little time render him abſolutely unfit for that ſtation.

In the year 1709, Mr. *Alexander M'Leod*, a gentleman, who, to ſay nothing of thoſe qualities which rendered him a conſiderable perſon in his own profeſſion, being a councellor at law, poſſeſſed in an eminent degree a virtue highly praiſe-worthy, though far from being a faſhionable one, the love of mankind in their moſt important concerns, mortified an annual ſum of 300 merks *Scots*, for the benefit of all thoſe who ſhould in ſucceeding ages publiſh the tidings of ſalvation at *Hirta*. This ſum, together with another mortification of 400 merks *Scots*, deſtined by that gentleman for pious uſes, is under the management of the Society for propagating Chriſtian Knowledge.

It will hardly be expected, after all the pains employed by a ſucceſſion of miniſters, whom

whom the world may probably rank in the loweſt claſs of public teachers, that the *St. Kildians* can have the exacteſt notions of the Chriſtian inſtitution. I muſt confeſs, that their apprehenſions of the divine nature and perfections, are in ſome inſtances groſs enough, though infinitely leſs ſo, than thoſe of many antient and perhaps modern philoſophers.

The belief of a deſtiny, or an unavoidable reſiſtleſs fate, is one of the ſtrongeſt articles of their creed; and it will poſſibly be found upon examination, that the common people in all ages, and in moſt countries, give into the ſame notion. At *St. Kilda*, fate and providence are much the ſame thing; after having explained theſe terms, I have aſked ſome of the people there, whether it was in their power to do good and evil. The anſwer made by thoſe who were unacquainted with the ſyſtematical doctrines of divinity, was, that the queſtion was a very childiſh one; as every

man alive muſt be conſcious, that he himſelf is a free agent: But how a principle of free agency, and abſolute fate, abſolute predeſtination, abſolute preſcience, and a particular providence, extending to the human will, may be reconciled, is a metaphyſical queſtion, on which no one has ever yet beſtowed any ſerious reflections among the laity of *Hirta:* And here, for ought I can ſee, theſe poor illiterate men act more wiſely, and perhaps more philoſophically and religiouſly, than they, who like the fallen Angels of *Milton* *,

In thought more elevate, will, reaſon high
Of Providence, fore-knowledge, will and fate,
Fixt fate, free-will, fore-knowledge abſolute,
And find no end, in wandring mazes loſt.

The *St. Kildians* are devout; they attend divine worſhip very regularly, and ſtrictly obſerve the Lord's day. Their morals are, and muſt be purer, than thoſe of great and

* Parad. Loſt, book II. v. 558, &c.

opulent

opulent ſocieties, however much civilized. Some of them are rather free of vices than poſſeſſed of virtues: diſſimulation, or a low ſort of cunning, and a trick of lying, are their predominant faults: The temptation to theſe little mean vices is ſurely ſtrong.

I have obſerved before, that every *Hirta* man pays a certain heavy tax, in proportion to the ſtock of various kinds he poſſeſſes; his intereſt inclines him daily to diſſemble in this article, and a practice of lying ſoon becomes general and habitual.

A late able writer has obſerved, in his political ſyſtem, that virtue flouriſhes beſt in Republicks, or what is much the ſame, in a land of liberty: But of all the vices that grow up under deſpotiſm, lies and hypocriſy are perhaps the moſt prevalent. Slavery will always produce an abject meanneſs of ſoul, the never-failing ſource of inſincerity.

If this obſervation be juſt, the inhabitants of *Hirta* ought to have a large ſhare of theſe unmanly vices. Undoubtedly they were kept in a ſlaviſh dependance. The doctrine of paſſive obedience, they underſtand better than thoſe who are ſo fond of it in theory, and at the expence of others; though to the divine right, upon which the ſame men lay the foundation of it, they are abſolute ſtrangers.

I know the preſent ſteward will never oppreſs them; both his father and he have relieved them from many grievous taxes; but ſhould their ſucceſſors incline to renew them, the people can have no redreſs, they can have no acceſs to courts of Juſtice. Thoſe who will have it in their power to oppreſs them, are their ſupreme and only judges; and though it be true enough, that their governors are neither better nor worſe than higher potentates; it is equally certain, that men in authority will incline

cline to deſpotiſm. The *Roman* ſatyriſt's obſervation is infallibly juſt. "Thoſe "who are quite averſe to kill any one "alive, will chooſe to have that in their "power."

CHAP. XIII.

Whether St. Kilda *be a place proper for a Fiſhery?*

FROM the account given above of the vaſt multitudes of ſea fowls that ſeek their food on this coaſt, we may very juſtly conclude, that there muſt be inexhauſtible ſtores of fiſh there. Let us for a moment confine our attention to the conſumption made by a ſingle ſpecies of fowls. The Solan-Gooſe is almoſt inſatiably voracious; he flies with great force and velocity, toils all day, with very little intermiſſion, and digeſts his food in a very ſhort time; he diſdains to eat any thing worſe than herring or mackerel, unleſs it be in a very hungry place, which he takes care to avoid or abandon. We ſhall take it for granted, that there is an hundred thouſand of that kind around the rocks

of

of *Hirta*, and this calculation is by far too moderate, as no leſs than twenty thouſand of this kind are deſtroyed every year, including the young ones. We ſhall ſuppoſe, at the ſame time, that the Solan-Geeſe ſojourn in theſe ſeas for about ſeven months of the year, that each of them deſtroys five herrings in a day, a ſubſiſtance infinitely poor for ſo greedy a creature, unleſs it were more than half ſupported at the expence of other fiſhes. Here we have one hundred thouſand millions of the fineſt fiſh in the world devoured annually by a ſingle ſpecies of the *St. Kilda* ſea fowls.

If in the next place it be conſidered, that much the greateſt part of the other tribes have much the ſame appetite for herring, and purſue it from place to place, in the ſeveral migrations it makes from one ſea to another, the conſumption muſt be prodigiouſly great. Taking theſe into the account, and allowing them the ſame quantity

tity of food, and of the ſame kind, by reaſon of their vaſt ſuperiority in point of numbers, though their ſtomachs are conſiderably weaker; we ſee there are no leſs than two hundred thouſand millions of herrings ſwallowed up every year by the birds of a very ſmall diſtrict of rocks, which occupy ſo inconſiderable a ſpace in the *Deucaledonian* ocean.

Should all the articles of this account be ſuſtained, articles which ſeem to be no leſs juſt than plain, and ſhould our curioſity lead us into a new calculation, allowing between ſix and ſeven hundred to every barrel, and enough in all reaſon; it is evident, that more than three hundred and thirty thouſand barrels are annually carried away by ſuch creatures of little uſe to the human ſpecies. We muſt except the *St. Kildians*, together with a few more, and add, at the ſame time, that the fowls of the air muſt vindicate their ſhare of God's

God's bounty, having undoubtedly an equal right to it.

Here a projector would have a rare opportunity of displaying his parts, and of amusing himself with the theory of a scheme, which in his imagination will soon or late do his country a very essential service; though perhaps never to be carried into execution. In the seas about *St. Kilda*, and the other western islands, a person of such a fertile genius, and publick-spirited turn of mind, will readily discover mines of silver and gold, richer, in his fancy, than those of *Peru* and *Brasil*.

I cannot, for my share, be insensible, that there are no more than a few persons of a deep and correct understanding, who have a right to offer their advice to the publick, however ready the shalloweſt projectors are to do so; and every one knows, that a fishery scheme encouraged by the *British* parliament, in another latitude,

goes

goes on but heavily. I ſhall therefore ſay no more than what is indiſputably true, that the weſtern iſlands are moſt advantageouſly ſituated for a trade of this kind; and that the ſeas, with which they are ſurrounded, teem with immenſe quantities and unequalled varieties of fiſh.

How far this natural ſource of wealth may deſerve the ſerious attention of a commercial people; whether theſe intruſted with the adminiſtration of affairs ſhould, in peaceable times, regard an object in appearance ſo very intereſting, theſe only who have juſt and extenſive views of trade, have a right to determine. In the mean while it cannot be thought an unpardonable preſumption in a man to affirm, that the firſt Monarch of Great *Britain* never gave ſuch a clear demonſtration of his ſkill in *King-Craft*, as in his attempt to proſecute this important buſineſs; and to introduce the ſpirit of induſtry in thoſe remote parts, which nature has pointed out,

as

as the places peculiarly deſtined by her for this branch of commerce.

Had that Monarch's ſcheme been vigorouſly purſued, the profits ariſing from it, profits never to be exhauſted, and very ſeldom precarious, muſt have very probably given *Scotland*, had it continued a ſeparate kingdom, ſome conſiderable weight in the political balance of *Europe*.

No one diviſion of the old world, nor perhaps of the new, has been ſo richly furniſhed with theſe treaſures, which may be fiſhed up out of the ſea, as this country. Our more induſtrious neighbours and rivals, have long ago diſcovered the immenſe value of this extraordinary bleſſing, and have wiſely improved it to their own advantage.

To aſſign the cauſes which have hitherto hindred the execution of this great and ſalutary ſcheme, which King *James* had the

the honour of forming, is no part of my province. I ſhall only obſerve, that new cares engroſſed this Monarch's attention, after his acceſſion to the throne of *England*; and that his deſign had been in a great meaſure fruſtrated, before he left his native country, by the wicked intrigues of ſome powerful ſelf-intereſted men. But after all, the experiment made by that King in the *Lewis*, though feebly proſecuted by the Sovereign, cunningly traverſed by a great highland family, and frequently interrupted by the natives, has produced very good effects. There is hardly any large tract of land equal in point of ſterility to that part of the *Lewis*, where this fiſhery was no more than half eſtabliſhed: But ſuch are the profits ariſing from this branch of buſineſs, and ſo great the benefits ariſing from a ſpirit of induſtry; a ſpirit raiſed here by a colony of frugal and unweariedly active men ſent from *Fife*; that the people of *Stornoway*, a very ſmall village in that diſtrict, have, in ſpite of manifold diſad-

vantages,

vantages, found out the ſecret of commanding more trading veſſels, and conſequently more money, than all their neighbours put together. The farmers here pay their rents by a very little attention to the fiſhing, after the buſineſs of the ſpring is over, and before the buſineſs of the harveſt comes on. The preſent proprietor ſeems to be in the humour of encouraging ſailors and others to ſettle here, and of forming ſchemes, which will probably carry this branch of buſineſs to ſome perfection. The latter attempts made in the fiſhing trade, about the weſtern iſlands, though ſupported by encouragements not inconſiderable, have been but faintly, and perhaps improperly purſued, and for that reaſon only have hitherto become ineffectual.

The rocks to which the people of this iſland can have acceſs with their angling rods, are only two, and theſe abundantly frightful to any other race of mortals. On each of them are ten ſitting places, ſo they

call the craigy declivities, where they plant themſelves while at the fiſhing; and on every one of theſe, two men make a ſhift to ſtand or ſit. There they catch a variety of excellent fiſhes, cod, ling, mackerel, turbot, pollocks, perches, lithes, and ſome other kinds. The currents around the iſland are very ſtrong, and I have already obſerved, that there is no harbour about the coaſt, unleſs one give that name to the bay, ſo that if fiſhermen ſhould be ſoon or late employed here, their buſſes ſhould be able to ſtand the ſea in all weathers, I mean from the latter end of *March*, till about the beginning of *September*. There can be no impropriety in making another remark here. In ſome of the other weſtern iſlands are many bays and harbours, equal perhaps to any in *Europe*. The buſſes, as ſoon as reduced to the neceſſity of quitting the ſeas around *Hirta*, might eaſily ſecure themſelves in theſe, and lie there, if unſucceſsful, till the herring ſhould caſt up in ſome other place upon the weſtern coaſt:

Nor

Nor is there any great cauſe to apprehend, that they will, after making ſuch expenſive trials, meet with diſappointment more frequently than ſhips otherwiſe employed in more precarious branches of trade. Some of the more northern *Ebudes* will almoſt infallibly furniſh vaſt ſhoals of herring every year; and at this very time, while I write this, any perſon may purchaſe in the iſland of *Sky*, as many of that kind as will be enough for filling up a barrel, for leſs than one ſhilling. Nor is this almoſt incredible plenty of them unprecedented: The caſe has been exactly the ſame laſt year, and often enough before it.

CHAP. XIV.

Of the firſt inhabitants of Hirta, *its revolutions and preſent ſtate.—Concluſion.*

SHOULD the moſt ignorant and unthinking perſon in *St. Kilda* be aſked, how his little country was peopled for the firſt time, it would be impoſſible for him to give a more irrational account of that matter, than ſome of the wiſeſt and moſt illuſtrious nations of antiquity, have given of their own origin. It was an old opinion, almoſt univerſally received among the vulgar, and patronized by ſome very ſhrewd philoſophers, that in the beginning of the world, men were, by ſome ſtrange prolific virtue, produced out of the ground like plants: For this reaſon the ancients generally called themſelves the *ſons of the earth.* The *Athenians*, though beyond compariſon the moſt learned people of all *Greece*, and

the great improvers of arts and ſciences, had the weakneſs to aſſume the name of *Autochthones*, a name in their conceit honourable, though in truth ignominious and abſurd; a name which ſignifies, that their anceſtors ſprung after the manner of muſhrooms, out of the very ſoil which they cultivated.

Cæſar ſeems to have believed, that thoſe who inhabited the interior parts of *Britain*, had no original connection with any other nation upon the *Continent* of *Europe*, and muſt have conſequently been produced there. Were it poſſible to adopt a notion ſo inconſiſtent with the principles of ſound philoſophy, no leſs than with the dictates of true religion, the *St. Kildians*, have perhaps the beſt right of any people in the univerſe, to an original ſo romantic. " What man in his ſenſes, could think of " leaving *Africa*, *Aſia*, or *Italy*, and after " expoſing himſelf to the perils of a ter-

" rible unknown ſea, take it into his head " to ſettle in *Germany*, a region where the " ground makes ſo diſmal an appearance, " where the climate is unfavourable, where " the arts of agriculture will not ſuffici- " ently reward or indemnify the huſband- " man's toil, and where every thing muſt " be diſagreeable to the eye, unleſs it hap- " pen to be one's own country." This is the great argument, with which *Tacitus* attempts to prove, that the firſt inhabitants of *Germany* were *Indigenæ*, or the proper growth of that ſame land. Let the author's words undergo a ſmall alteration, and the ſame argument will conclude, with ſome greater appearance of reaſon, that the firſt race of the *St. Kilda* people muſt have been *Autochthones*, *Aborigines*, *Indigenæ*, or the natural growth of *Hirta*. If one chuſes to deny, that *God made of one blood, all the nations of men to inhabit the face of the earth*, it will be natural enough for him to adopt this hypotheſis; and we know, that no tribe

of

of men have become more egregiouſly fooliſh, than thoſe who profeſſed themſelves to be wiſe.

But to diſmiſs this genealogical fancy of poets, philoſophers, hiſtorians, and whole nations, to me it ſeems probable, that *Hirta* was at firſt peopled by pyrates, exiles, or malefactors who fled from juſtice. Such men would have very naturally aſſociated together, and formed a reſolution of retreating to a place of ſafety, where the reſentment and vengeance of the moſt powerful enemies could hardly approach them:—And that the people ſettled here of old, were under apprehenſions of being purſued or invaded, appears from the vaſt pains they took to fortify an iſle naturally impregnable.

If we can eaſily forgive that vanity, which induced ſome of the greateſt and moſt ſenſible nations in the world, to

carry up their reſpective pedigrees to the *Trojans* of King *Priam*'s race, or to thoſe of that name, who left their country under the conduct of *Æneas* and *Antenor*; one can have no difficulty in pardoning the *St. Kildians*, for drawing their origin from an *Iriſh* worthy.

Ireland had the good fortune to paſs among our progenitors, for the mother of arts and ſciences, and likewiſe for the land of ſanctity and military glory; but whatever pretenſions antient *Hibernia* may have juſtly had to one or more of theſe characters, it is hardly credible, that one of her heroes would have ſettled himſelf at *Hirta*, though the name of the old fort there, *Dun-fir-Bholg*, intimates clearly enough, that either the founder, or thoſe who gave it that title, muſt have had a profound reſpect for the *Iriſh*.

The poſterity of thoſe who were the true natives of *St. Kilda*, are diſtinguiſhed by

by the ſir-names of *Mac Ille Mhoirre*, and *Mac Ille Rhiabhich*. The former ſeem to have come originally from the *Lewis*, where that name continues to prevail, and the latter from *South Uiſt*. The *Mac Ille Rhiabhichs* value themſelves not a little upon their connection with the Captain of *Clan Ranald*, to whom *South Uiſt* belongs. But from the *Galic* dialect ſpoken at *Hirta*, from the method of preparing the ground, and manufacturing cloaths there, it may with ſome probability be concluded, that the bulk of the people came at firſt from the northern extremity of the *Long Iſle*.

Our antiquaries are generally agreed, that ſir-names were introduced into *South Britain* by the *Normans*, and into *Scotland* by King *David* the Saint, or his Father. Before that period we had clans without all doubt, that is to ſay, conſiderable bodies of men, ſtrongly connected with

one another, and almoſt unalterably attached to one common head: But that we had hereditary ſir-names, conveyed from the father to the ſon, and from one generation to another, it is perhaps more than difficult to prove.

The *Athenians* had their *Philæ* or tribes; the *Romans* their *Gentes* or clans; and before either of theſe nations exiſted, the *Iſraelites* were divided into twelve very great ones. It is unneceſſary to ſhow, that the names of theſe particular tribes, to which men belonged among theſe three mighty nations, were generally added to their proper ones. But that names correſponding with the former, names peculiar to certain tribes, clans or families, were before the twelfth century hereditarily affixed to the proper names of perſons, is a point too hard to be eſtabliſhed by any genealogiſt: The two *St. Kilda* clans already mentioned muſt probably be of a modern date, for I

am apt to ſuſpect, that *Hirta* was more than once depopulated ſince its firſt plantation, and conſequently more than once repeopled. The property or juriſdiction of that little iſle muſt have belonged, ſoon after it began to be inhabited, to ſome great man in *Uiſt*, *Harris* or the *Lewis*; and if the proprietor ſhould have neglected his vaſſals, or people there, for a courſe of years, and if the only boat of the iſle ſhould have been deſtroyed by time, or ſome unlucky accident, it ſeems evident, that the inhabitants may have periſhed totally, or have been reduced to a very ſmall number. Their inſtruments of agriculture would have been worn out, their fiſhing hooks loſt, the little iſles and rocks, which furniſh the greateſt part of the wild fowl and eggs, would have been inacceſſible, and every other reſource, excepting that of their cattle, muſt have failed. From this ſuppoſition, which ſeems to be abundantly rational, as the highland chieftains were

fre-

frequently at open war with one another for many years, and as the *St. Kilda* boat, is peculiarly ſubject to caſualties, I would infer, that the *Mac Ille Mhoirres* and *Mac Ille Riabhachs* were not ſettled in *Hirta* till ſir-names became faſhionable, or common among the vulgar in the iſles, a change which took place there not above four hundred years ago. Before that period, the names under which theſe of the higheſt ranks and fortunes there went were commonly patronimical ones, or appellations derived from the ſize or form of their bodies, the colour of their hair or clothes, ſome bodily imperfection or deformity, ſome mental or perſonal accompliſhment, the name of the place where they were born, educated, or held a great ſway, their profeſſion, trade, manner of living, or ſome ſuch characteriſtical mark of diverſity.

Should any one obſerve here, that all this genealogical enquiry into the origin of

of the *St. Kilda* people, is at once unimportant and full of uncertainty, I ſhall very freely allow the juſtneſs of the remark, reſerving to myſelf, at the ſame time, the liberty of thinking, that this ſhort diſcuſſion is equally authentic, and to a *Scotſman* equally intereſting, with the hiſtory of *Peruvian Incas*, that of the ſeveral *Dynaſties* of *Egypt*, of the *old Emperors of China*, of the *firſt Kings of Aſſyria*, and of the ſmall kingdoms of *Greece*, *Sicyon*, *Argos*, *Mycenæ*, *Athens* and others.

I ſhall not undertake to determine, at what time the *Norvegians* began to infeſt the weſtern coaſts of *North-Britain*: We learn from an old hiſtorical record, called the Chronicle of Man, publiſhed by *Cambden*; that *Godred Crovan*, an adventurer from *Iceland*, who had attended *Harold Harfager*, King of *Norway*, in his expedition into *England* immediately before the *Norman* conqueſt, made himſelf maſter of

Man

Man and the *Ebudes*, and that he and his poſterity reigned over that little kingdom, during the ſpace of two hundred and ſixty years.

It appears from the ſame Chronicle that *Somerled*, Thane of *Argile*, forced away a conſiderable part of that little kingdom, the half probably, from the grandſon of *Godred*, which he and his ſucceſſors enjoyed with little interruption for many ages.

After *Alexander* the Third had purchaſed the kingdom of *Man* and the *Iſles*, from the *Norvegians*, or had reduced it by the power of his arms, it would ſeem, that all the iſles which lie to the north of *Cantyre*, fell to the ſhare of *Somerled*'s poſterity, or were left in their hands, to be held of our *Scottiſh* Monarchs. In the number of theſe iſles, *St. Kilda* was comprehended.

It

It is, I believe, no eaſy matter to trace out the name, nor of courſe the hiſtory of *Hirta*, with any degree of certainty, beyond the fourteenth century.

In a charter granted within that period, by *John, Lord of the Iſles*, to his ſon *Reginald*, and confirmed by King *Robert* the Second, *St. Kilda*, under the name of *Hirt*, was made over, together with many other places, to the ſaid *Reginald*: How, at the end of two or three generations, the property of this iſle was transferred from the ſucceſſors of *Reginald*, the predeceſſor of *Clan Ranald*, to the family of *Sleat*, now repreſented by Sir *James Mac Donald*, and how, in proceſs of time, it fell into the hands of the Clan that now poſſeſſes it, is an uſeleſs inquiry; and were the queſtion of greater importance, ſo contradictory are the accounts given, and ſo ſlender the hiſtorical evidences on every ſide, that any judicious perſon will chuſe

to

to leave that matter undetermined. At this time the proprietor is *Norman Mac Leod* of *Mac Leod*; and *his* anceſtors have poſſeſſed it for at leaſt two hundred years back.

The preſent proprietor has given a leaſe of *Hirta*, and every thing pertaining to it, to a Cadet of his own family, with the yearly rent of about eleven pounds *Sterling*; and the predeceſſors of the ſame Leſſee, have enjoyed much the ſame right, or one equivalent, for three generations back.

This is the perſon called the *Steward*, who, before this or his own rent can be made effectual, muſt be at the annual expence of fitting out a large Highland boat to bring his grain, feathers, and any other perquiſites that fall to his ſhare, or any commodities he buys from the people, to *Harris*, where he generally reſides. It muſt

muſt be confeſſed, that the voyages made by him thither, are attended with ſome danger.

In former times the principal perſons of this little Commonwealth, came yearly in their own boat to *Dunvegan*, the Proprietor's principal ſeat, and brought the ſmall taxes they had to pay. There they were re-baptiſed, ſo tradition informs us, or the baptiſm which had been formerly adminiſtred to them at *St. Kilda*, by Midwives, or old men, was in ſome manner confirmed, though perhaps uncanonically.

I am told that the great grandfather of the preſent *Mac Leod*, was ſponſor for an old man and his ſon, an adult perſon, at the ſame time; and upon the ſame occaſion, the marriages of ſeveral couples

couples who had cohabited together for many years, after having solemnly plighted their faith to each other at *Hirta*, were declared legal.

CON-

CONCLUSION.

FROM the account given of *St. Kilda*, under the preceding articles, it is evident, that the ſteward may, if he pleaſes, reign deſpotically over it; and will any man anſwer for a ſucceſſion of abſolute government. Humanity and religion are the only laws to controul him. From his ſentence the helpleſs people neither dare nor can appeal to any other judge; ſuch is the ſituation of their land, they cannot have recourſe; nor is it in their power, were they men of ſpirit or letters, to tranſmit their complaints to the proprietor without the ſteward's privity: He may confine them within the iſle during life, torture their perſons if cruelly inclined, confiſcate their goods, and do every act of violence, unleſs reſtrained by his own heart or underſtanding.

It will be thought, that the miniſter's preſence, advice, and remonſtrances, may have conſiderable weight. Indeed this circumſtance ought to be a favourable one, and may be ſo too in ſome ſmall degree. But as the miniſter is himſelf in ſome degree a priſoner, as his living here with any comfort, and his enjoying the very neceſſaries of his ſuſiſtance, depend ſo much on the ſteward's friendſhip, it may be convenient for him to look on with a prudent taciturnity, if he intends to continue long in the place. I add further, that any one who undertakes to exerciſe the ſacred function in this remote and uncomfortable little dioceſe, may be very reaſonably thought a perſon of no great authority or influence.

But amidſt a variety of unhappy circumſtances, the *St. Kildians* have their own peculiar advantages. Born philoſophers, they have ſenſe enough to confine their am-

ambition within the bounds prescribed by nature. *If to admire nothing*, be the great virtue and art to make men happy, and to keep them so, felicity may be found among them or no where.

Silver and gold, stately houses and costly furniture, together with the fantastic luxury of dress, and the table, they neither have nor desire. To rise in fleets and armies amidst infinite toils and dangers: To earn posts or pensions, after having wriggled themselves into the favour of the *Great*, at the expence of honour and conscience: To create overgrown estates, after having practised all the vile arts of avarice, frauds, extortion, and servility, are passions and wishes, which Providence has kindly concealed from them. The humble blessings of bread and wild fowl, of peaceful cottages and little flocks, of angling rods and hunting ropes, are all the riches, honours, and profits they aspire after.

If at a diſtance from the ſeats of juſtice, they are abſolute ſtrangers to the law's delay. If ignorant and unphiloſophical, they are libertines neither in belief or practice; nor with learned ſpeculations ſtrike at the foundation of virtue, nor produce any breach of the public tranquillity or happineſs.

They firmly believe the exiſtence and providence of a ſupreme being, the immortality of human ſouls, the obligation of morality, and the neceſſity of piety, righteouſneſs and temperance. They are moſt luckily illiterate enough, not to have heard the unhappy names of thoſe great reformers of a deluded world, and improvers of the human underſtanding, who openly aſſault theſe eſſential articles, or endeavour to undermine them.

The modern rules which oblige a reaſonable being, under the pain of eternal in-

infamy, to throw away his own life, or to plunge his ſword in the bowels of his friend or neighbour: In other words, the laws of honour are too exalted to lie within the low ſphere of their knowledge. The exceſſes of intemperance, the mad quarrels and extravagant frolicks of drunkenneſs, the ſhameful uſe of places dedicated to the ſervice of lewdneſs and folly, of diſgrace and miſery, they never yet knew or felt.

In fine, if all things are fairly weighed, in the balance of unprejudiced reaſon, the *St. Kildians* poſſeſs as great a ſhare of true ſubſtantial happineſs, as any equal number of men elſewhere.

Of thoſe who may happen to read this account, ſome may think that I have been much too prolix in handling a very trivial ſubject; but I hope any part of the human ſpecies, will not be thought too trivial to deſerve our attention. Our fellow ſubjects

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and fellow Chriſtians, have a right to our regard and ſympathy: At any rate I think the *St. Kildians* may be ranked among the greateſt curioſities of the moral world, and of courſe may be conſidered in a light which will render their hiſtory, without any great impropriety, or expence of time, the amuſement of a few idle hours.

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